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## Integrazione Scolastica in Italy: Implications for American Schooling of Children with Disabilities

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## **Integrazione Scolastica in Italy: Implications for American Schooling of Children with Disabilities**

Submitted by:

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University of Vermont

Department of Education

in fulfillment of a faculty member's responsibility  
to submit a report to the Department Chair  
within 90 days of completing a sabbatical.

Date of Sabbatical: Fall Semester 2011

Date of Submission: January 16, 2012

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## I. Introduction and Purpose of Sabbatical

Over the past two decades, educating students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, alongside their peers without disabilities, has increasingly become a focus of global attention and advocacy (Ferguson, 2008; Vislie, 2003). In part, this has been evidenced internationally through the development and ratification of the *Salamanca Agreement* (UNESCO, 1994) and Article 24 (Education) of the *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (United Nations, 2006). These international accords strongly favor inclusive education for children and youth with disabilities as a foundational human rights issue. Historically, many children and youth with disabilities have either been denied access to education or have been relegated to segregated education (i.e., special education schools and classes). Segregated approaches have been based on benevolent, yet ultimately discriminatory assumptions and practices that have limited their opportunities and civil rights.

For over 30 years Italy has been well known internationally for being a leader in the field of educating students with disabilities in typical classrooms (Berrigan, 1988; Berrigan & Taylor, 1997; Ianes, 2006). Historically known in Italy as "integrazione scolastica" (Canevaro & de Anna, 2010; D'Alessio, 2008a), the vast majority of students with a full range disabilities (those who typically are educationally segregated in many other western countries including the United States) are educated in general education classrooms alongside their peers without disabilities in Italian schools.

Italy's current approach to school inclusion of students with disabilities began in the 1970s with the passage national legislation and the development of corresponding policies that virtually eliminated special education schools and classes in favor of providing special education supports for students with disabilities in typical classrooms. Around the same time the United States also enacted a law, the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975* (later renamed *IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*). Similar to the Italian legislation, the US statute favored the placement of students with disabilities in general education classes, using the terminology of placement in the "least restrictive environment". Although legislation in both countries were built on anti-discrimination and civil rights foundations - the two countries have taken quite different paths in implementing their respective legislation.

The US approach to including students with disabilities has been slow and incremental. From the 1970s to the most recently available (2009) statistics ([www.ideadata.org](http://www.ideadata.org)) when the sabbatical proposal was submitted, the percent of US students with disabilities placed in general education classes has risen steadily from about 30% to 59%, yet there is tremendous variability between States. Except for a small number of outliers, most states report general class placement rates for students with disabilities ranging from 40% to 70%. Nationally, the vast majority of students in certain disability categories are mostly excluded from general education classes. For example, only 16% of students with intellectual disabilities (referred to as "mental retardation" in the federal data) are educated in typical classes as their primary placements, with 14 states and the District of Columbia in single digit percentages (AZ, HI, IL, ME, MI, MN, MO, NV, NJ, NY, SC, WA, WI, WY). Similarly, only 13% of students with multiple disabilities are placed in general education classes.

Whereas when Italy made this shift to general class placement for students with disabilities, they did so virtually all at once, based in part on the premise if these students had to wait to be included until attitudes of school personnel were more accepting/positive and all needed supports were in place that their inclusion may never arrive (Berrigan & Taylor, 1998). So once enacting their first national policies in 1971, Italy shifted from a system of primarily segregated special

education that had been established in the 1960s to one where students with disabilities were rapidly included in regular classes; with the percentage remaining consistently at approximately 98% from the late 1970's until now -- this includes categories of students who tend to be excluded in the US (e.g., students with intellectual disabilities). This dramatic shift was reportedly undertaken without sufficient attention to the supports needed by many students with disabilities, resulting in a chaotic initial experience (1971-77) referred to by some as "integrazione selvaggio" (Vitello, 1991), translated as "wild integration". In 1975 the Italian government clarified that the severity of disability must not prevent integration. By 1977, with the passage of National Law 517, Italian schools now had a series of supports to assist them in their inclusion of students with disabilities (e.g., limits on class size, proportions of students with disabilities in one classroom, caseload parameters for special educators). It is also important to note that Italy identifies approximately 2% of its school-aged children and youth as "disabled", compared to 12%-14% in the US. For example, children we label as "learning disabled" or not considered "disabled" in Italy (Fabbro & Masutto, 1994).

Today *integrazione scolastica* is firmly entrenched in Italian schools and society. Some researchers have suggested that ongoing inclusive opportunities have contributed to students with genetic syndromes associated with intellectual disability (e.g., Down syndrome, Fragile-X) functioning at higher levels, academically and socially, than their counterparts in countries where they are typically segregated (Vianello & LanFranchi, 2009). Yet, the Italian approach has its critics who question whether students with disabilities have better outcomes (Begeny & Martens, 2003). While attitudes of Italian teachers tend to be more favorable about the inclusion of students with disabilities than American teachers, Italian teachers voice many similar concerns as those here regarding the adequacy of their preparation and supports available to teach students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Cornoldi, Terreni, Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1998), despite the fact that the caseloads of Italy's specialized support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*) average two pupils with disabilities and have established maximum of four set by national legislation (Palladino, Cornoldi, Vianello, Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1999), substantially lower than US special education teachers. We came to better understand the complexities over time.

Here in Vermont we have had a long history of being considered a national leader in the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classes, being ranked first in the nation for many years until about 5 years ago. Since the early 1990s the percent of students with disabilities included in general education classes has declined from 89% to approximately 70% in recent years. For the past few years the Vermont Department of Education has identified our declining inclusion rate among a small number of high priorities reported to the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs.

By studying Italian approaches to educating students with disabilities I sought learning and understanding to inform: (a) my own research agenda on inclusive educational service delivery, (b) our preparation of special and general education teachers, and (c) educational practices in Vermont schools and nationally. This sabbatical offered a unique opportunity to move outside my traditional (US-exclusive scholarship) to explore this key international example.

## II. Major Sabbatical Activities

**Note:** As indicated in the approved sabbatical plan, the sabbatical activities were carried out collaboratively with Dr. Mary Beth Doyle who received a sabbatical at the same time. Dr. Doyle is Associate Professor and Chair of the Education Department at St. Michael's College. Her

*scholarship focuses on various aspects of inclusive special education. Prior to the sabbatical, between 1995 and 2011, we had collaborated extensively, co-authoring 16 of publications.*

### **A. Identification, Reading, and Annotation of Relevant Literature**

During the summer prior to our sabbatical semester we identified, read, and annotated a series of English-language publications directly about integrazione scolastica, as well others on related topics. Most were primarily journal articles, but the set included books, chapters, reports and other documents. During the sabbatical semester we continued to identify, read, and annotate additional articles as they became available or we became aware of them. By the end of the sabbatical semester we had read 57 publications. The complete bibliography is included in one of the sabbatical outputs. (*see III B3*). Reading this body of literature was foundational to formulating questions and facilitating our interactions with Italian colleagues and observing in Italian schools.

### **B. Preparatory Conversations Scholars with Experiences in Italy**

During the July and August preceding our travel to Italy we held a series of conversations via Skype videoconferencing or phone with 11 colleagues (*see II B1*), all of whom had visited or lived in Italy and who had a relevant connection connections to our topic of study because they had visited schools in Italy to learn about integrazione scolastica and/or had established research/scholarship partnerships with Italian colleagues. Six were Americans, one each was from Canada, Finland, Malta and the UK, and one was an Italian who had been working in Denmark and studying in the UK.

The purpose of these conversations was to gain perspectives of primarily non-Italians, since so often in a new culture experiences or phenomena that are common to natives are unclear to visitors, or as Italians refer to them "strangiere" (foreigners). Conversations typically lasted 1 hour and some were as long as 2 hours. Most conversations were recorded with the permission of the interviewee using *Call Recorder*, a Skype plug-in application. These recordings were not for research purposes, but were a memory aid to accompany notes taken during the conversations. Interviewees were given assurances of confidentiality and recordings were stored on a single, password-protected computer. Each conversation started by establishing the nature and extent of the individuals' experiences in Italian schools or with Italian educators by seeking an individually determined subset of information (*see II B2*). We also wanted to understand: (a) what was important from their perspective, (b) what stood out to them about their experiences, and (c) and their perspectives about issues we had identified through our literature. To that end we developed a series of content category prompts that we inquired about in an individualized manner based on the person's type of experience in Italy (*see II B3*). These pre-travel conversations, in combination with our reading and annotation of the literature, provided invaluable insights that allowed our time in Italy and the questions we asked to be more targeted.

#### *II B1. List of individuals who participated in pre-travel conversations*

<u>Date</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>
July 6, 2011	Colin Newton, MSc	Inclusive Solutions, Inc. (UK)
July 6, 2011	Elena Tanti-Burlò, PhD	University of Malta (Malta)

July 7, 2011	Michael Wehmeyer, PhD	University of Kansas
July 8, 2011	Tom Scruggs, PhD	George Mason University
July 11, 2011	Timo Saloviita, PhD	University of Jyväskylä (Finland)
July 12, 2011	Stan Vitello, PhD	Rutgers University
July 12, 2011	Simona D'Alessio, PhD	European Agency of Special Needs Education (Denmark, based in Rome)
July 13, 2011	Beth Ferri, PhD	Syracuse University
August 1, 2011	Nancy Rother, MEd	Step by Step Preschool (Canada)
August 9, 2011	Jonathan Silverman, EdD	St. Michael's College
August 10, 2011	John Begeny, PhD	North Carolina State University

*II B2. Categories to establish the nature and extent of individuals' experiences in Italian schools*

- number of visits to Italy to observe or learn about Italian efforts at inclusive education
- years when visits occurred
- approximate length of visit
- approximate number of Italian Schools visited
- approximate number of Italian Educators you interacted with
- range of disabilities and support intensity levels of students observed in Italian schools
- range of ages/grades observed in Italian schools
- other sources of knowledge about Italian efforts at inclusive education beyond visits to Italy (e.g., literature review, research)
- How would you characterize/describe your level of knowledge of Italian efforts at inclusive education?

*II B3. Content Category Prompts based on Reviewed Literature*

- general education teacher ownership and engagement with students with disabilities
- role of special education teachers (insegnante di sostegno) in the classroom and with students with and without disabilities
- use and roles of paraprofessionals (classroom and 1:1)
- collaboration between general and special education teachers
- curricular approaches/design (e.g., Universal Design; Differentiated Instruction)
- curricular and instructional adaptations
- extent of inclusion students with disabilities at the secondary level
- support services
- peer interactions
- who are the students who are in special schools
- what happens to the students who Americans consider to have LD, EBD, ADHD, other high-incidence disabilities
- perceived or observed strengths
- perceived or reported concerns
- Open prompt: Anything else particularly important that we haven't touched on?

### **C. Primary Italian Liaisons**

During the sabbatical application process we had three Italian Universities and primary liaisons that committed to assist us during our proposed three-month travels throughout Italy:

#### *II C1*

- a. University of Padova: Dr. Cesare Cornoldi
- b. University of Bari: Dr. Giulio Lancioni
- c. University of Rome: Dr. Lucia deAnna

As planning proceeded slight changes were made in both our university affiliations and primary liaisons. After an initial positive response from Dr. de Anna indicating her willingness to assist and host us (see sabbatical application), several future attempts to email her were unsuccessful. We were fortunate to identify an alternative in Rome, a colleague based there who was working for the European Agency for Special Needs Education and working in schools. We were also fortunate to have two additional university colleagues agree to assist us and help arrange school meetings and visits. The final set of organizations and primary liaisons are reflected in the following list (*see II C2*). All arrangements for dates of engagement were set prior to arrival in Italy. Each of our primary liaisons connected us with several other new colleagues (e.g., school personnel, agency personnel, university faculty, parents).

#### *II C2*

- a. University of Padova: Dr. Cesare Cornoldi
- b. University of Pavia: Dr. Paola Palladino
- c. University of Catania: Dr. Santo DiNuovo
- d. University of Bari: Dr. Giulio Lancioni
- e. European Agency for Special Needs Education: Dr. Simona D'Alessio
- f. Italian Association for People with Down Syndrome: Dr. Simone Conseguate

### **D. Cultural Preparation, Emersion, & Exploration**

Visiting a foreign country with a different culture and language requires contextual and cultural learning to accompany the content learning, especially in the study of social institutions such as schools and integrazione. This is a key reason why spending an extended period of time in Italy was essential. Additionally, we designed our calendar and living experiences in an effort to maximize the cultural context learning in ways that short or strictly tourist visits cannot replicate.

Prior to the overseas travel we engaged in Italian language learning, both through conversational language classes and by investing in an Italian language software program called *Fluenz*. Although we did not have any expectation that we would be fluent, we gained initial language skills that we extended during our time in country and which proved to be helpful, both functionally and in terms of establishing relationships with colleagues and others. By greeting in Italian and being able to string together a few simple sentences, it demonstrated a level of respect for the host country that was universally appreciated by the Italians we met. Since English is an international language and a common language of research and international scholarship, many Italians we met spoke English (certainly better than our Italian), though many did not. We were fortunate that all substantive school and university interactions included bilingual individuals

who served as interpreters when necessary. When in schools we met many English teachers, who were called upon by their building administrators to serve as translators.

The design of our three months in Italy was meant to allow us to experience some reasonably typical aspects of daily life as well as see different regions of the country. We purposely based ourselves the first two months in one location, Padova, a northern city about a half-hour train ride west of Venice. There we lived in an apartment in a mixed socio-economic class neighborhood where we followed typical Italian routines. We rode old bikes to work and around town (no car during these two months), walked, and occasionally took the electric tram within the city. Intercity travel was by train or bus. We went to various markets to buy food, hung our laundry to dry (no clothes driers), learned the norms of being a pedestrian on crowded city streets, ate out with new Italian friends and colleagues, experienced their coffee and wine culture, and generally immersed ourselves in the day-to-day life in ways that cannot happen when staying in hotels or driving in a car. These daily activities certainly and substantially helped us understand the culture because we had to negotiate it daily as non-native speakers and provided us with many challenging and wonderful human interaction opportunities.

Because Padova is in a densely populated part of northern Italy and easily accessible to other cities, we used Padova as a home base to do two work related side trips to: (a) Lombardia to visit schools in Pavia, Belusco, and Vimercate as well as to work with colleagues at the University of Pavia, and (b) Tuscany to attend and present at a national conference in Prato (*see II D1*). During the first two months we had the majority of our experiences in the Veneto region, as well as work and non-work experiences in a total of six regions in northern Italy and 10 in all.

During the third month of our trip we traveled to four other regions of Italy. First we visited Sicily for two weeks where we met with colleagues at the University of Catania and visited schools in nearby Acireale. Non-work experiences included Taormina, Siracusa, Ragusa, and the area in and around Agrigento. From there we traveled to Bari in the Puglia region to visit a school and meet with colleagues at the University of Bari. Our next stop was Rimini, in the eastern coastal Emilia-Romagna region, to attend a national conference on inclusive education. Our final stop before heading home was to Rome, in Lazio, to visit two more schools, meet with our colleague for the European Agency for Special Needs Education, and visit the Italian Association for People with Down Syndrome (*see map II D2*). An important cultural experience occurred our final week in Italy. Based on a meeting with a cultural liaison working at the final school we visited in Rome, we were invited to visit an encampment of about 180 Roma people; these are undocumented immigrants of Bosnian Muslim heritage from the former Yugoslavia who came to Italy about 50 years ago. Now the third generation born in Italy are still without legal identity papers, thus making it impossible for them to participate in mainstream society since they cannot obtain legal work, get a driver's license, vote, travel or engage in any other common civic activities.

#### *II D1 Regions visited in chronological order*

<u>Region</u>	<u>Sabbatical Work (n=7)</u>	<u>Cultural Exploration (n=10)</u>
a. Veneto	Yes	Yes
<u>Side trips from Veneto:</u>		
b. Trentino-Alto Adige	No	Yes
c. Friuli	No	Yes
d. Lombardia	Yes	Yes
e. Toscano	Yes	Yes



f. Umbria	No	Yes
g. Sicilia	Yes	Yes
h. Puglia	Yes	Yes
i. Emilia-Romagna	Yes	Yes
j. Lazio	Yes	Yes



### E. Meetings with Italian University Faculty

During the sabbatical semester we met with 19 faculty members from five different universities. The foci of our conversations were primarily on: (a) school structure and functioning, (b) *integrazione scolastica* (e.g., history, laws, current status, successes, challenges), and (c) personnel preparation. Many opportunities were had to discuss current events in Italy (e.g., economic crisis, politics, the departure of Prime Minister Berlusconi, strikes, floods) as well as culture (e.g., family life, food, recreation, customs, art, architecture, history). Of the many university faculty members with whom we interacted, a small subset have already resulted in initial collaborative work and hold the potential for future collaborations.

The following lists those university faculty members with whom we had substantive meetings. Notably, the vast majority of faculty members were from departments of psychology because in Italy psychologists are the key professionals who study educational and behavioral interventions for students with disabilities and other special educational needs. In Italy,

university departments referred to as, "Educational Sciences", is a relatively new structure; historically they were departments of pedagogy with a primary focus on pedagogical theories and philosophy. Whereas the sub-parts of departments of psychology that focused on students with disabilities and other special educational needs directed much of their attention to interventions (e.g., reading, math, writing, social skills, daily living skills). Therefore, the work of some Italian psychology professors aligns quite closely with US special education faculty, whereas the content of Educational Sciences in Italy aligns more closely with what US Colleges of Education might consider educational foundations.

## *II E1 List of Italian University Faculty Colleagues (presented in chronological order)*

*\* Denotes our key contact person in a region*

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Institution of Higher Education</i>	<i>Department</i>
a.	Cesare Cornoldi, PhD*	University of Padova	Psychology
b.	Irene Mammarella, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
c.	Daniela Lucangeli, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
d.	Renzo Vianello, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
e.	Barbara Arfè, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
f.	Alessandra Cesaro, PhD	University of Padova	Educational Sciences
g.	Salvatore Soresi, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
h.	Laura Nota, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
i.	Lea Ferrari, PhD	University of Padova	Psychology
j.	Teresa Sgaramella	University of Padova	Psychology
k.	Paola Palladino, PhD*	University of Pavia	Psychology
l.	Maria Antoinette Barbarossa, PhD	University of Pavia	Psychology
m.	Santo DiNuovo, PhD*	University of Catania	Psychology
n.	Paola Magnano, PhD	University of Enna	Psychology
o.	Giulio Lancioni, PhD*	University of Bari	Psychology
p.	Fabrizio Castolla, PhD	University of Bari	Psychology
q.	Valeria Rossini, PhD	University of Bari	Educational Sciences
r.	Rosalinda Cassibba, PhD*	University of Bari	Educational Sciences
s.	Giuseppe Elia, PhD	University of Bari	Educational Sciences

## **F. Visits and Observations in Italian Schools**

We arrived in Italy approximately two weeks before school started for the academic year. This was designed to give us time to orient to our new environment and meet with local university faculty and provincial educational ministry personnel before visiting schools. We also needed to allow time for schools to be in session for a couple of weeks before we observed. Even though we had done extensive advance planning to arrange visits to schools (e.g., email contacts months in advance; writing letters of introduction that we had translated to Italian and distributed to school sites we hoped to visit), we found that once we arrived that more needed to be done to arrange access to public schools (e.g., meeting with provincial educational administrators). Our original plan committed to visiting schools in Padova, Bari and Rome. In actuality, as a result of networking, we were able to visit additional schools in the Veneto region near Vicenza, as well as schools in Sicily (i.e., Acireale), and Lombardia (i.e., Pavia, Belusco, Vimercate).

Between October 6, 2011 and November 24, 2011, we visited 16 schools across the age/grade span from preschool. These included, 5 preschool/elementary schools, 4 elementary/middle schools, and 7 high schools of various types (e.g., liceo, technical, professional). We also visited a specialized therapy center in Padova for children with disabilities run by an organization with branches across Italy called La Nostra Famiglia (Our Family) where students with disabilities receive access to services such as physical therapy, occupational therapy, applied behavior analysis therapy. We also observed an after school program in Rome operated by the Italian Association for People with Down syndrome. **In total we met with and observed 180 adults and 81 students with certified disabilities** (based on Italian standards) in a variety of situations (see *II F1*).

#### *II F1 Number Students with Disabilities Observed*

**Total N = 81** Students with Disabilities Observed (34 Females, 47 Males)

N = 64 Students with Disabilities Observed in Regular School Setting/Program

n = 52 Students with Disabilities Regular Classroom (with nondisabled peers)

n = 10 Students with Disabilities Other Non-Classroom Settings (Regular School)

n = 2 Students with Disabilities in Community-based setting during school day

N = 17 Students with Disabilities Observed in Nonschool Settings/Programs

n = 10 in Special Center

n = 7 Community-based after school program

N = 860 students without disabilities in the 37 classrooms that included one or more students with disabilities were placed (estimate based on average class size of 23.25)

During these visits we had meetings/conversation with 89 individuals in the following categories (see *II F2*) to discuss Italian schooling and particularly integrazione scolastica. Some of these individuals spoke English and in every situation there was at least one fluent bilingual individual who served as an interpreter.

#### *II F2 Numbers and Categories of Individuals Met with for Conversations*

<u>N</u>	<u>Category</u>
23	Insegnante di Sostegno (Specialized Support Teachers)
10	General Education Teachers (often English teachers who also served as interpreters)
4	Provincial Administrators
17	School Administrators (e.g., principals, assistant principals)
11	Parents of Students with and without disabilities
24	<u>Agency</u> personnel and others (e.g., psychologists, cultural liaisons, therapists, educatore)
89	Total

In addition to the individuals we met with (above), we also observed 91 school personnel (e.g., classroom teachers, special educators, assistants) in 37 different classrooms.

### **G. School Demographic Data Collection**

At each school visited we collected demographic data using an introductory letter and questionnaire we had developed in advance, had translated before leaving Vermont, and then had reviewed by a bilingual researcher in Italy prior to sharing with any school sites (see Appendix A: Introductory Letter; Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire). Due the possibility of misunderstanding we discussed each question, through an interpreter when necessary to verify the meaning of the question and their responses. The questions were based on a subset of variables we have been studying in Vermont schools. Since we had so much to learn about the system of education and culture, it seemed inappropriate to conduct a formal study until we understood more -- especially one involving human subjects. These data were not human subject data, but rather school demographic data primarily about the numbers and types of students as well as personnel numbers from which we could calculate some additional school variables (e.g., combined number and percent of students with disabilities and other special needs; average special educator caseload; ratio of special educator to total school population; ratio of paraprofessionals to special educator).

We are in the process of analyzing these data. Once the analysis is completed we intend to verify with each school that it acceptable to them to share these data publicly, only identifying the school by region and level (e.g., High School A: Veneto Region; Primary School C: Sicilia), not by name or specific location. Since it would be presumptuous of us to engage in significant meaning-making regarding these data given our rudimentary understanding of the Italian system of education, we have made a proposal to an Italian journal (*Life Span and Disability*) that publishes in English and Italian. We plan to ask that the article we plan to write be reviewed for publication. We intend to write the discussion section in a manner that asks what these data mean to Italians. The editors have agreed to invite responses to the data from a set of Italian scholars to begin a dialogue about these types of data and their potential value in Italy. This is a format the journal has employed in the recent past and we think it is one that would make sense in this case.

### **H. Conference Attendance**

During the sabbatical stay I attended two national conferences, presenting at the first one.

1. 20th National Congress AIRIPA (Italian Association for Research and Intervention in Psychopathology of Learning on the Disorders of Learning), Prato, Italy (October 20-22, 2011)

Presentation Title: "Rethinking Personnel Utilization to Facilitate the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities" (my session attendance ~250):

2. Erickson Center Conference on Inclusive Education, Rimini, Italy (November 18-20, 2011)

### **I. Sabbatical Journal & Notes**

Throughout the sabbatical I maintained a daily personal journal, partly as memory aid and partly as a way to reflect on my experiences. I maintained a second set of notes that explicitly addressed conversations and meetings with Italian colleagues and school visits. I intend to reread, sort, and analyze these notes to mine them for material to generate additional written outputs.

### III. Sabbatical Outputs

#### A. Invited Presentations in Italy (N=6)

"Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities in Regular Class: Common Problems & Potential Solutions" presented to faculty and students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Pavia, Pavia, Italy. (October 6, 2011)

"Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities in Regular Class: Common Problems & Potential Solutions" presented to faculty and students in the Department of Psychology at the University of Padova, Padova, Italy. (October 17, 2011)

"Rethinking Personnel Utilization to Facilitate the Inclusion of Students with Disabilities" presented at the 20th National Congress AIRIPA (Italian Association for Research and Intervention in Psychopathology of Learning on the Disorders of Learning), Prato, Italy. (October 21, 2011)

"Inclusive Education in the United States: Issues, Challenges & Trends" presented to conference, *Diversity and Integration: Promoting Citizenship for the Disabled and Immigrants*, sponsored by the Center for the Integration and Active Participation of Disabled Persons, University of Catania, Catania, Sicily, Italy, (November 3, 2011)

"Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities in Regular Classes: Common Problems & Potential Solutions" presented to students preparing to be primary grade teachers in the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Bari, Italy. (November 14, 2011)

"Integrating Students with Severe Disabilities in Regular Classes: Common Problems & Potential Solutions" presented to students preparing to be secondary grade teachers in the Department of Educational Sciences at the University of Bari, Italy. (November 16, 2011)

#### B. Written Products/Publications

(Published, in press, and/or submitted for publication review, N=5)

Doyle, M. B., Giangreco, M. F., Cornoldi, C., & Lucangeli, D. (2011). Parliamone con... Cesare Cornoldi e Daniela Lucangeli intervistano Mary Beth Doyle e Michael F. Giangreco. *Psicologia e Scuola: Giornale Italiano di Psicologia dell'Educazione e Pedagogia Sperimentale*, 30(18), 8-11. (see Appendix C)

This short, invited article was presented in the journal as an interview, but in actuality we were provided with a series of questions (generated by the third and fourth authors above) and were asked to write responses, which we (the first and second author co-wrote).

Giangreco, M. F., Doyle, M. B., & Lucangeli, D. (in press). Educare gli alunni con disabilità in classi regolari [Educating Students with Disabilities in Regular Classrooms]. *Psicologia e Scuola: Giornale Italiano di Psicologia dell'Educazione e Pedagogia Sperimentale*. (see Appendix D)

This article was solicited (not invited) and underwent peer review. The first two authors co-wrote the entire text. Since the article is in the Italian language, the role of the third author was to translate it into Italian and edit to ensure accuracy of content and meaning.

Giangreco, M. F., & Doyle, M.B. (2011). *Integrazione scolastica in Italy: A compilation of English-language resources*. Manuscript submitted for publication review. (See Appendix E)

This document was unusually long for a traditional journal submission (61 double-spaced pages) and also was unusual in its organization and content. Given these factors we submitted the article to an international, peer-reviewed journal that publishes only online. Their online format allows them to be unconcerned about page length and specifically note in their directions to authors that there is no page length.

Doyle, M. B. & Giangreco, M. F. (2012). *Guiding principles for including secondary students with intellectual disabilities in general education classes*. Manuscript submitted for publication review. (See Appendix F)

This article summarizes a series of key issues that we found relevant in both American and Italian schools. It has been submitted for publication review.

Giangreco, M. F., Doyle, M. B., Suter, J. C. (in preparation). *Teacher assistants in inclusive schools*. In L. Florian (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of special education* (2nd. ed., pp. tbd). London: Sage.

This invited chapter reviews international literature, including Italy. It also will include a table with short contribution from scholars from a variety of countries. We have already made arrangements with two of our colleagues at the University of Padova (Laura Nota and Salvatore Soresi) who agreed to contribute a section on Italy's use of paraprofessionals. Scheduled for submission late January to early February 2012.

#### **IV. Impact on Research Agenda and Collaboration with Italian Colleagues**

##### **A. Projected Follow-up and Extended Work**

###### ***1. Projected Additional Written Products/Publications***

###### **a. School demographic data summarization.**

As described earlier we intend to summarize the school demographic data we collected with our UVM colleague, Jesse Suter. We have obtained permission to use these (non-human subjects) data, we made a proposal to an Italian journal, *Life Span & Disability*, to review the manuscript for publication and to work with them to invite responses from Italians who specialize in these topics. They have accepted this proposal pending acceptance of the article.

- b. Consultation on Italian-initiated research regarding children with learning disabilities (LD).

My Italian colleague, Cesare Cornoldi (University of Padova), invited me to participate in a study he is designing in conjunction with a colleague in France to compare the attitudes and practices of teachers regarding students with LD in Italy, France, and the USA to determine if there are any key differences given that both France and the USA count students with LD among their students with "disabilities", whereas in Italy students with LD (called DSA in Italy for Disturbo Specifico Dell'apprendimento -- Specific Disorders of Learning). To date my role has been to review the initial sampling plan and proposed content of the questionnaire. Since this not my area of study or particular interest, I am not sure I will accept the invitation to authorship, but have committed to offering research assistance and feedback to my colleague as the work progresses (e.g., review of the survey instrument, sampling plan, data analysis). There may also be opportunities for other UVM education faculty, those who do focus more on LD, to participate in this study if they are interested in collecting data in Vermont.

- c. Along with my sabbatical partner (Mary Beth Doyle) and my UVM colleague (Jesse Suter) I plan to combine what I was studying prior to sabbatical with what I learned during sabbatical to write about an alternative framework for delivering special education support services in inclusive elementary schools.
- d. Italian schools are facing a variety of challenges and problems. Understanding these were vital to my contextual understanding, but were not the focus of my sabbatical learning. My primary goal was to explore elements of integrazione scolastica in Italy that might inform practices in the US. I intend to review the information I collected and write an article summarizing some the key potential elements that, in fact, may inform our practices.
- e. When I was in Padova, I learned from Professor Laura Nota, that she was working with a graduate student on a study that was replicating some of my earlier published research on paraprofessionals. She asked if I would participate with them in finalizing this work. She informed me that she would send me information about their study within a couple of months. In the meantime, one of my tasks will be to check with the UVM IRB to clarify the rules regarding international collaboration on research activities.
- e. Although there may be other writing projects that emerge from the information collected during the sabbatical period or based on future invitations from Italian colleagues, those listed above represent the highest priorities for follow-up and will likely take an additional year to complete when approached in staggered format.

## ***2. Projected Presentations***

- a. I plan to offer a presentation of my sabbatical learning for my program faculty in special education and early childhood special education, with a particular focus on the preparation of teachers and special educators through our teacher licensure programs.

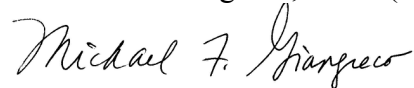
- b. I will offer to make a college-wide presentation on my sabbatical learning through the CESS Research Council. I have contacted Associate Dean, Susan Comerford to request a date for this presentation in March or April 2012.
- c. I will incorporate learning from this sabbatical in future presentations -- some of which are already scheduled (e.g., keynote via videoconference for the Australian Association of Special Educators, July, 2012).

## **V. Conclusion**

This sabbatical has truly been the experience of a lifetime. Never before have I had the opportunity to intensely study one thing for a full semester and be able to immerse myself in a different culture and language for three months. Being only minimally competent in the primary language of my host country and in many facets of daily life being outside my comfort zone pressed me to new learning, insights, and perspectives that I hope to apply to my work and personal life as I re-enter my traditional roles at UVM and home. I am grateful to UVM for affording me this opportunity, to my colleagues at the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion who took over some of my duties during my absence, and to the large number of colleagues from several countries (e.g., Argentina, Spain, Canada, Finland, Italy, Malta, New Zealand, UK, USA), who some manner, contributed to a successful sabbatical experience.

Appendices A - F are included on the following pages.

Respectfully submitted on January 16, 2012 by  
Michael F. Giangreco, Ph.D. (UVM, Department of Education)





## **Appendix A: Letter of Introduction and Request to Visit Schools**

### **Introduzione e richiesta di visita scuole**

Il mio nome è Michael Giangreco. Sono un professore di pedagogia presso l'Università del Vermont a Burlington, (Il Vermont si trova nel nordest degli Stati Uniti). La mia collega (e mia moglie), Mary Beth Doyle, è anche professoressa di pedagogia, lei lavora presso il St. Michael's College a Colchester, Vermont. Per ulteriori informazioni, vi invitiamo di consultare le pagine web delle nostre facoltà:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/archives/mgiangre/>

<http://www.smcvt.edu/academics/education/faculty.asp>

Entrambi, abbiamo avuto una lunga storia di lavoro nel campo della pedagogia speciale. Abbiamo trascorso molti anni lavorando con e studiando bambini e giovani con disabilità, i loro genitori, gli insegnanti, gli insegnanti di sostegno, i terapisti, gli assistenti e gli amministratori della scuola. Siamo in Italia per tre mesi (settembre, ottobre e novembre) per studiare l' "integrazione scolastica".

Gradiremmo della possibilità di osservare in aule, nelle quali sono inclusi bambini con disabilità. Siamo particolarmente interessati a bambini che hanno disabilità intellettiva e disabilità multiple. Ci piacerebbe avere la possibilità di parlare con il personale delle scuole per discutere del loro lavoro con i bambini che hanno queste disabilità. Anche se stiamo imparando l'italiano, non è sufficiente per portare avanti una conversazione di questo genere. Quindi, se qualcuno ha una conoscenza della lingua inglese, sarebbe molto apprezzato. La ringrazio in anticipo per la possibilità di imparare dalle vostre esperienze.

### **Introduction and Request to Visit Schools**

My name is Michael Giangreco. I am a professor of education at the University of Vermont in Burlington, Vermont located the northeastern part of the United States. My colleague (and my wife), Mary Beth Doyle, is also a professor of education. She works at St. Michael's College in Colchester, Vermont. For further information, please consult our faculty web pages:

<http://www.uvm.edu/~cdci/archives/mgiangre/>

<http://www.smcvt.edu/academics/education/faculty.asp>

We have both have a long history of working in the field of special education. We have spent many years working with and studying children and youth with disabilities, their parents, teachers, support teachers, therapists, assistants, and school administrators. We are in Italy for three months (September, October and November) studying "integrazione scolastica". We want to learn more about how Italian schools include and support children with disabilities in typical classrooms with children who do not have disabilities.

We would appreciate the opportunity to observe in classrooms where children with disabilities are included. We are especially interested in children who have intellectual disabilities and multiple disabilities. We would appreciate the opportunity to talk with the schools' staff about their work with children who have these disabilities. Even though we are learning Italian, it is not sufficient to carry on a conversation of this nature. Therefore, if anyone has English language skills it would be greatly appreciated. Thanking you in advance for the opportunity to learn from your experiences.

## Appendix B: School Demographic Questionnaire

### Informazioni demografiche sulla scuola *(Demographic Information about the School)*

Data: \_\_\_\_\_ Nome della scuola: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(date)* *(Name of school)*

1. Fasce scolastiche interessate dalla scuola: 1a. Fascia più bassa: \_\_\_\_\_ 1b. Fascia più alta: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Grades served at the school)* *(Lowest grade)* *(Highest grade)*
2. Numero medio di studenti per classe \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Average number of students per class)*
3. Numero totale di studenti, con e senza disabilità, in questa scuola: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Total number of students, with and without disabilities, in this school)*
  - 3a. Numero di studenti provenienti da minoranze etniche o culturali: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students from ethnic or cultural minorities)*
  - 3b. Numero (approssimativo) di studenti svantaggiati economicamente: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students economically disadvantaged)*
  - 3c. Numero di studenti che parlano l'italiano come seconda lingua: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students who speak Italian as a second language)*
4. Numero di studenti con disabilità (tutti i tipi certificati con Piano Educativo Individuale): \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students with disabilities (all the types certified and with Individual Education Plan))*
  - 4a. Categorie di disabilità: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Categories of disabilities)*
  - 4b. Numero di studenti con disabilità che rimangono in classe (regolare) per almeno l'80% del tempo: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students with disabilities in class (regular) at least 80% of the time)*
5. Numero (stimato) di studenti con bisogni educativi speciali (BES), non certificati disabili, senza un PEI: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number (estimated) of students with special educational needs, not certified disabled, without IEP)*
6. Numero di studenti in una classe speciale o che sono stati mandati in una scuola speciale: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of students in special class or sent to special school)*
7. Numero di insegnanti di sostegno in questa scuola (numero di posizioni equivalenti posizioni a tempo pieno): \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number of specialized support teachers at this school -- in full-time equivalents)*
8. Numero di assistenti polivalenti o altre figure associate a bambini con bisogni speciali: \_\_\_\_\_  
*(Number, if any, of special education assistants)*

Appendix C: Article Published in *Psicologia e Scuola* (2011)

## PARLIAMONE CON...

Cesare Cornoldi e Daniela Lucangeli intervistano

Mary Beth Doyle e  
Michael F. Giangreco

Da sinistra: MICHAEL F. GIANGRECO, MARY BETH DOYLE, DANIELA LUCANGELI, CESARE CORNOLDI.

**Mary Beth Doyle**, Ph. D., ha conseguito il dottorato in psicologia dell'educazione presso l'Università del Minnesota ed è attualmente professore associato e titolare di cattedra presso l'Education Department del St. Michael's College. Il suo lavoro mira a offrire agli insegnanti curricolari dell'istruzione secondaria e agli insegnanti specializzati una preparazione finalizzata a favorire l'inclusione e l'educazione di alunni con disabilità in classi regolari.

È autrice di *The Paraprofessional's guide to the inclusive classroom: Working as a team*, Brookes Publishing Company, e di numerose altre pubblicazioni

sull'educazione inclusiva. Ha insegnato sia ad alunni con disabilità multiple gravi che ad alunni con disturbi dell'apprendimento.

**Michael F. Giangreco**, Ph. D., ha conseguito il dottorato in educazione speciale alla Syracuse University ed è attualmente docente nell'Università del Vermont presso il Department of Education and Center Disability & Community Inclusion. I principali obiettivi del suo lavoro sono la ricerca e la collaborazione con le scuole relativamente all'offerta di servizi di educazione inclusiva speciale, alla scelta e al coordinamento dei servizi di supporto e alla progettazione e l'adeguamento del curriculum e dell'istruzione al fine di includere alunni con disturbi dello sviluppo in classi regolari. È autore di numerosi studi di ricerca e altre pubblicazioni sull'educazione inclusiva. Inoltre è coeditore di più di trecento fumetti su problematiche educative e sui risultati della ricerca nella collana «Absurdities and Realities of Special Education». Ha lavorato nell'ambito dell'educazione speciale come insegnante di alunni con gravi disabilità multiple, come amministratore e con incarichi affini.

## PARLIAMONE CON... / Mary Beth Doyle e Michael F. Giangreco

*Nei mesi di settembre e ottobre 2011 la facoltà di Psicologia dell'Università di Padova ha ospitato Mary Beth Doyle e Michael F. Giangreco, due studiosi americani specializzati nell'educazione inclusiva di bambini e adolescenti con disabilità. I due studiosi hanno trascorso tre mesi nel nostro paese visitando scuole e incontrando colleghi italiani (a Padova, Pavia, Vimercate, Prato, Catania, Bari, Rimini, Roma) allo scopo di comprendere meglio il lavoro svolto in Italia e trarne utili spunti per il proprio. Li abbiamo intervistati per conoscere la loro opinione su alcune problematiche fondamentali.*

**D:** Qual è il vostro personale atteggiamento nei confronti dell'educazione inclusiva di alunni con disabilità?

**R:** Siamo consapevoli di come la pratica dell'educazione inclusiva non sempre rispecchi i suoi fondamentali filosofici, o almeno è questa la nostra esperienza negli Stati Uniti. Abbiamo imparato che quando un alunno con disabilità viene inserito con successo in una classe regolare, spesso ciò ha meno a che fare con la sua diagnosi di disabilità o con le sue caratteristiche individuali che con le nostre personali caratteristiche di adulti responsabili della sua educazione. Abbiamo osservato molte situazioni in cui studenti con la stessa diagnosi e caratteristiche molto simili si sono pienamente integrati in una

classe ma non in un'altra. Questi studenti non sono sostanzialmente diversi; diversi sono, piuttosto, gli atteggiamenti e i metodi degli adulti. C'è chi ritiene che alcuni alunni con disabilità "non si adattino" alle classi regolari poiché hanno obiettivi o bisogni diversi da quelli degli altri. In questi casi, sarebbe opportuno individuare traguardi comuni e perfettibili che sfocino in un'esperienza più positiva.

**D:** Rilevate differenze significative per l'educazione inclusiva tra Italia e Stati Uniti?

**R:** In primo luogo, in Italia si certifica come disabile soltanto il 2% circa degli alunni contro il 13% circa degli Stati Uniti. Ciò non significa che negli Stati Uniti vi siano effettivamente più bambini con disabilità; si tratta semplicemente di una questione di definizione. Gli Stati Uniti definiscono come alunni disabili anche soggetti con "disturbi dell'apprendimento", ciò che non accade in Italia, e questo può spiegare la differenza. Riteniamo che gli americani potrebbero trarre beneficio dal conoscere l'orientamento italiano sulla certificazione di disabilità, considerando soprattutto che molti bambini con lievi ma significativi problemi di apprendimento nella lettura, nella scrittura e in matematica dovrebbero essere sostenuti dall'insegnamento curricolare senza aver bisogno di essere

certificati come "disabili" per ricevere il tipo di educazione e di supporto necessari al conseguimento di risultati positivi.

In secondo luogo, ci è di conforto l'elevatissima percentuale di alunni con disabilità – circa il 99% – inseriti in Italia in classi regolari. La rapida chiusura negli anni Settanta delle scuole e delle classi speciali a favore dell'inserimento in classi regolari contrasta con l'approccio lento e graduale degli Stati Uniti, dove attualmente soltanto il 60% degli alunni con disabilità è inserito in classi regolari come collocazione primaria. Vi sono, purtroppo, ancora molti studenti con disabilità che frequentano classi e scuole speciali, i quali potrebbero beneficiare dell'inserimento in classi regolari se vivessero in Italia.

In terzo luogo, per sostenere gli alunni con disabilità, soprattutto quelli con disturbi dello sviluppo, l'Italia conta su un numero di insegnanti di sostegno proporzionalmente inferiore a quello degli Stati Uniti. D'altra parte, in Italia l'insegnante di sostegno ha una formazione specifica, mentre negli Stati Uniti si fa sempre maggiore affidamento su personale meno qualificato, con preparazione carente e scarsamente supervisionato. Il crescente ricorso a queste figure negli Stati Uniti è stato accompagnato dal loro errato utilizzo – ben documentato dalla ricerca – con una serie di effetti negativi indesiderati: dipenden-

## PARLIAMONE CON... / Mary Beth Doyle e Michael F. Giangreco

za, stigmatizzazione, interferenza con l'azione educativa dell'insegnante e con l'interazione tra i pari, diminuita possibilità di accesso all'istruzione competente, gravi disparità di trattamento per gli alunni con disabilità. Sarà interessante per noi comprendere in che modo le scuole italiane riescano a rispondere ai bisogni degli alunni con disabilità senza fare un eccessivo e improprio affidamento sull'assistenza esterna. Al di là delle differenze, comunque, ci sembra che i nostri paesi stiano affrontando le stesse sfide, come ad esempio un curriculum e un'istruzione adeguati, il coordinamento dei servizi, le strategie per includere gli alunni in attività condivise malgrado le diversità nei livelli di funzionamento. Ci auguriamo di poter collaborare con i colleghi italiani sulla base dei nostri comuni intenti.

D: Come sono preparati gli insegnanti per l'educazione speciale negli Stati Uniti e cosa suggerite per migliorarne la formazione?

R: Negli Stati Uniti la maggior parte dei programmi dei corsi di formazione degli insegnanti specializzati richiede un diploma con specializzazione in storia, arte e matematica, e una seconda specializzazione in educazione speciale oppure il possesso dei requisiti stabiliti dai singoli stati. Molti programmi si basano sugli standard di conoscenza e di rendimento formulati in *What every special educator must know*, pubblicato dal Council

for Exceptional Children ([www.cec.sped.org](http://www.cec.sped.org)) come fondamento dei corsi di formazione. Diversi Stati richiedono inoltre un titolo di laurea per conseguire l'abilitazione all'insegnamento specializzato. Normalmente la formazione di un insegnante specializzato implica la frequenza di corsi di pedagogia accompagnati da un periodo di tirocinio intensivo, superato il quale segue un'esperienza di insegnamento a tempo pieno (con supervisione) per metà anno scolastico. Al di là delle differenze fra programmi, l'uso di standard comuni aumenta la probabilità che i candidati completino la loro formazione avendo dato prova di possedere quelle conoscenze e quelle abilità fondamentali necessarie per insegnare ad alunni con disabilità. La maggior parte dei programmi per la formazione di insegnanti curricolari della scuola primaria e secondaria prevede un unico corso propedeutico all'insegnamento ad alunni con disabilità. Considerate le diverse caratteristiche degli alunni con disabilità, un solo corso appare insufficiente. Per questo motivo, alcuni programmi stanno inserendo corsi complementari per la doppia abilitazione e coloro che sono intenzionati a diventare insegnanti curricolari hanno l'obbligo di frequentare tali corsi per conseguire l'abilitazione sia all'insegnamento curricolare che all'insegnamento specializzato. La Syracuse University è stata la prima ad attuare questo tipo di programma con l'"Inclusive

Elementary and Special Education Program", seguita da un numero crescente di università che hanno organizzato o stanno organizzando corsi complementari simili. Se in passato solo gli insegnanti specializzati possedevano la doppia abilitazione, l'aspetto innovativo di questi corsi consiste nell'essere stati concepiti per far conseguire la doppia abilitazione agli insegnanti curricolari, per potenziarne la capacità di fornire un'istruzione efficace agli alunni con disabilità e affrontare nuove sfide didattiche.

D: Voi avete scritto una guida (*COACH: Choosing Outcomes & Accommodations for Children*) per aiutare le équipe a elaborare piani educativi per alunni con gravi disabilità. Quali sono le componenti più importanti di questo strumento?

R: *COACH* è uno strumento di valutazione e progettazione ideato per il personale scolastico e le famiglie per concordare percorsi educativi individualizzati rivolti ad alunni dai 3 ai 21 anni con bisogni educativi speciali. *COACH* si articola in sei step, ma in questa sede vorremmo ricordare soltanto i primi tre. "The Family Interview" (Step 1) è il cuore di *COACH*: assiste le famiglie nella scelta di un numero ristretto di obiettivi didattici di massima priorità per i propri figli. "Additional Learning Outcomes" (Step 2) facilita l'identificazione di una gamma più ampia di obiettivi traendoli sia da quel-



## PARLIAMONE CON... / Mary Beth Doyle e Michael F. Giangreco

li presenti in COACH che da quelli formulati nel curriculum di educazione generale. "General Supports" (Step 3), infine, favorisce l'individuazione dei supporti necessari all'alunno. COACH presenta alcuni tratti caratteristici che lo distinguono dagli altri strumenti. In primo luogo, incoraggia l'atteggiamento di ascolto. Accade spesso che, pur con le migliori intenzioni, i professionisti dell'educazione dominino le interazioni genitori-scuola. COACH ribalta questa pratica comune e potenzialmente problematica, assegnando ai professionisti il ruolo di "intervistatore" (*question asker*) e di "ascoltatore" (*listener*), tramite l'utilizzo di una serie di domande appositamente concepite.

COACH aiuta a stabilire aspettative condivise sul piano educativo degli alunni, che sono fondamentali per l'instaurazione di un rapporto costruttivo casa-scuola.

In secondo luogo, COACH lega la scelta del curriculum individualizzato agli obiettivi che l'alunno ha già conseguito e dovrà conseguire nel suo percorso verso "cinque importanti traguardi di vita": sicurezza e salute, possesso stabile di un'alloggio, relazioni significative, controllo sulle scelte personali, attività significative in luoghi diversi e rilevanti. Grazie a queste importanti informazioni, il personale scolastico è reso recettivo alle prospettive che la famiglia ha delineato per lo studente e si adopera per il miglioramento della qualità della sua vita.

La scuola cerca spesso il contributo delle famiglie, ma con scarsa attenzione ai metodi usati. Domande aperte come: "Quali sono le priorità per Chiara?", possono rivelarsi utili per alcune famiglie, ma le inducono troppo spesso a rimettersi al giudizio dei professionisti o a fare scelte che non riflettono adeguatamente le loro prospettive. Una terza particolarità di COACH è il modo in cui ingloba elementi dell'*Osborn-Parnes creative Problem-Solving Process* (una procedura per la ricerca creativa di soluzioni). COACH offre, ad esempio, molteplici opportunità per un'alternanza fra il pensiero divergente e il pensiero convergente al fine di facilitare la scelta degli elementi adeguati per il piano educativo degli alunni. Gli aspetti divergenti incoraggiano l'esplorazione e la generazione di possibilità in un'atmosfera di sospensione del giudizio; gli aspetti convergenti incoraggiano l'analisi delle possibilità generate per concentrarsi su una gamma ristretta di opzioni lungo il percorso che conduce alle scelte definitive. Sebbene la ricerca su COACH sia ancora modesta – sei studi – si tratta dell'unico strumento di programmazione di cui siano stati documentati lo sviluppo, l'utilizzo e l'impatto.

D: Quale futuro vedete per l'educazione inclusiva?

R: Rispetto al passato molti paesi offrono opportunità di educazione inclusiva a quei settori della popolazione precedente-

mente esclusi, ma i progressi registrati negli ultimi quarant'anni sembrano fragili, minacciati dalle forze economiche e politiche e dalle insidie rappresentate dall'appagamento per i risultati raggiunti. Troppi bambini rimangono inutilmente esclusi da classi regolari, altri sono esclusi o separati "all'interno" di classi regolari impropriamente considerate "inclusive". Vogliamo quindi sottolineare l'estrema necessità di offrire opportunità inclusive di qualità agli alunni con disabilità, considerando che da simili cambiamenti trarrebbero beneficio non soltanto questi alunni, ma potenzialmente anche molti altri.

**Cesare Cornoldi**

È Professore ordinario di Psicologia Generale, Direttore del servizio sui Disturbi dell'Apprendimento dell'Università di Padova e Presidente nazionale AIRIPA (Associazione per la Ricerca e l'Intervento in Psicopatologia dell'Apprendimento).

Ha pubblicato in Italia e all'estero numerosi studi sull'apprendimento e sulla memoria.

**Daniela Lucangeli**

È Professore ordinario di Psicologia dello Sviluppo presso la Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università di Padova, Promotore per le attività di orientamento e tutorato, membro dell'*International Academy for Research in Learning Disabilities* e Presidente del C.N.U.S. (Associazione per il Coordinamento Nazionale degli Insegnanti Specializzati). Ha pubblicato in Italia e all'estero numerosi studi sull'apprendimento matematico e sullo sviluppo della cognizione numerica.

(Traduzione di Rancesca Rossi)

**Appendix D: Pre-publication version of "in press" article for *Psicologia e Scuola*  
(prior to Italian translation;)**

**Educating Students with Developmental Disabilities in Typical Classrooms**

Michael F. Giangreco  
University of Vermont

Mary Beth Doyle  
St. Michael's College

Daniela Lucangeli  
University of Padova

October 31, 2011

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What do you call it when a student with a disability is placed in a typical class with an individualized educational plan and support? Do you call it *integrazione scolastica*, *inclusive education*, or something else? Historically, the term *integrazione scolastica* has been, and continues to be, the terminology of choice among many Italians. Over the past several years inclusive education has emerged as alternative terminology that some scholars have attempted to differentiate from *integrazione scolastica*, though this has been complicated by the absence of an agreed upon definition of inclusive education in Italy and internationally. The debate about which terminology is preferred has been fueled by: (a) cultural and linguistic issues, (b) whether the terms pertain primarily to students with disabilities or include other populations (e.g., immigrants, children in poverty, speakers of a non dominant language), (c) disagreement about which terminology represents a higher level of practice, and (d) partial, fragmented, or low quality examples that are sometimes mislabeled as integrated or inclusive (Davern et al., 1997). It is not our intention to resolve this definitional issue here.

Regardless of what you call it, how you define it, or which terminology you prefer, what we have learned as is that we agree with Nota, Ferrari and Soresi (2006) who remind us that placement of a student with a disability in a regular class is not sufficient to ensure success and that much work remains to be done so that these students have equitable access to quality education. Our purpose here is to share five interrelated points to facilitate quality education for students with developmental disabilities at the classroom level. Although we hope these are points we can all agree about, minimally we offer these evidence-based points as reflective prompts that teams can use to explore ways to advance local efforts.

**Classroom Environment**

When you enter a classroom, how quickly can you identify the student with a disability? Is the student's desk or workspace separated from the typical arrangement of the classroom? Research from the US has identified that many students with developmental disabilities placed in

regular classes are physically separated at the back or side of the classroom, often seated with an assistant in close proximity (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli & MacFarland, 1997), substantively separating them from the life of the classroom. This has been a problem for as long as students with disabilities have been placed in regular classes. Biklen (1985) referred to this phenomenon as the "island in the mainstream" (see Figure 1). More recently, D'Alessio (in press; 2011) has identified a similar phenomenon in Italian schools she refers to as "micro-exclusion", where students with disabilities are separated, and potentially isolated, within the class with the insegnante di sostegno or assistant at his or her side, rather than participating in typical class activities facilitated by the classroom teacher.

More productive arrangements involve situating the student in a location among his or her classmates. Sometimes it can be helpful to purposely design the space to reduce the constant presence of a designated support person, thus allowing the classroom teacher and classmates to freely enter the space. For example, simply not placing a chair next to the student for an assistant or specialized teacher to sit in can encourage those personnel to move around the room providing support to other children. Or the support person (e.g., specialized teacher, assistant) can invite classmates into the target student's space when it is appropriate.

It is also important that the student's space in the class is chronologically age-appropriate. The school supplies, instructional materials, and personal items should be consistent with the chronological age of the classmates. Too often students, especially those with intellectual disabilities, have materials that are geared toward much younger children. This should be avoided because it can perpetuate an unhelpful cycle of low expectations and interactions by inadvertently sending the message that this person is like a much younger child. Classmates can be an excellent source of ideas about the social validity of materials and can offer creative alternatives that are age-appropriate. In summary, some of these very basic environmental variables, such as where the student sits, with whom, and what materials they use, can have a powerful impact on facilitating or interfering with class participation, peer interactions, and overall inclusive efforts.

### **Teacher Engagement**

Our experiences and research tell us that possibly the single most important factor affecting the success of a regular class placement for a student with a disability is the extent and quality of engagement the classroom teacher has with the student (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman & Schattman, 1993). Giangreco, Broer & Edelman (2001) identified a series of characteristics that varied among classroom teachers who were more engaged versus less engaged with their students with disabilities. More engaged teachers: (a) expressed an attitude of ownership for educating their students with disabilities, (b) were knowledgeable about their student's functioning level and learning outcomes, (c) collaborated with the specialized teacher based on clear roles and retained a high level of instructional decision-making pertaining to their students with disabilities, (d) participated in planning and providing instruction directly to the student with a disability at a similar level as they did for students without disabilities, and (f) directed and supervised assistants in the classroom, fading those supports as much as possible over time. Less engaged and disengaged teachers did the opposite to varying extents.

This research also documented that how other personnel are utilized in the classroom may facilitate or interference with desired teacher engagement. For example, when a full-time assistant was assigned to a student with a disability, teachers were less likely to be engaged. But when the assistant was assigned to provide support to the whole class under the direction of the



teacher, the teacher was more likely to be engaged with the student with a disability. These findings may be partially explained by earlier research indicating that ongoing, close proximity of an assistant is likely to create a physical or symbolic barrier to engagement by others, both teachers and classmates (see Figure 2) and lead to a host of unintended detrimental effects (Giangreco et al. 1997).

These findings may be applied beyond assistants to any support personnel in the classroom such as specialized teachers, therapists, or others. So it is vital to establish clear roles that include the curricular and instructional engagement of the classroom teacher as a key component because as the instructional leader in classroom, it is the teacher who sets the example for all students. If the teacher is engaged or disengaged from the student with a disability it sends a powerful message to the rest of the class about how they should behave toward students with disabilities. In addition, as students with disabilities progress through the grades and the curricular content becomes more advanced in a variety of subjects (e.g., foreign language, science, math, language arts), content area teachers bring specific expertise that specialized teachers or assistants cannot be expected to have. By working together they can apply their respective skills to ensure students' access to rich and interesting curriculum.

### **Conceptualizing Inclusion When a Large Gap Exists**

Students with moderate to severe intellectual disabilities may present a substantial functioning gap in learning achievement compared to their classmates without disabilities -- this gap tends to increase as students progress through the grades and the curriculum content becomes more advanced. The majority of US students with identified disabilities included in regular classes (e.g., learning disabilities, speech/language impairments) represent relatively small learning gaps, while those with larger gaps (e.g., intellectual disabilities, multiple disabilities) more commonly are served in special classes. Conversely, students in Italy with substantial learning gaps are typically placed in regular classes, as are those with smaller learning gaps (e.g., learning disabled), who are not certified as disabled. Many school personnel around the world find it challenging to conceptualize how a student with a severe intellectual disability can be meaningfully included in a typical class when this functioning gap is large -- it is at these times that inclusive education is put to the test. This issue is important in both countries to ensure quality access to regular class for students who experience these substantial learning gaps.

Without a clear conceptual understanding, when this gap exists a host of undesirable options often are set in motion that ultimately reduce inclusive opportunities including: (a) lowered expectations by limiting student goals in the regular class to social learning outcomes; (b) separation of the student within the classroom to do different work, (c) pulling the student out of class to do different work in a separate space, or (d) having the student spend part of their school day or week away from school at a disability-only setting. Although these actions typically are taken with the best of intentions, there are alternatives we can pursue to more fully leverage the benefits of inclusive schooling.

When students have relatively mild or even moderate intellectual disabilities common approaches such as differentiated instruction (Tomlinson, 2001) and universal design for learning (Rose & Meyer, 2002) can be effective. In these cases, students typically have the same learning outcomes as their classmates and are participating in the same instruction. A bigger challenge comes when the learning outcomes for most of the students do not closely match the needs of the student with a more significant disability. In these cases students with disabilities can be meaningfully included in regular class activities using partial participation (Ferguson &

Baumgart, 1991), multi-level curriculum, and curriculum overlapping (Giangreco, 2007). These approaches provide ways to think about, plan, and implement instruction when students with disabilities have substantially different learning outcomes than their classmates.

At its most basic, partial participation is the notion that students should be involved in whatever parts of the activity they can with adaptations provided as needed -- just because students may not be able to participate in every aspect of an activity does not mean they should be excluded from all of it. Multi-level curriculum and curriculum overlapping share a few common elements: (a) they are designed for mixed-ability groups, (b) students engage in a shared activity (e.g., educational game, lab experiment), and (c) each student has individually appropriate learning outcomes. What distinguishes the two approaches is that within multi-level curriculum all students in the shared activity have learning outcomes in the same curriculum area (e.g., math), even though they have different math outcomes. In curriculum overlapping students have learning outcomes from two or more curriculum areas within the same activity. For example, in a lab group, three students may have grade-level science learning outcomes and the learning outcomes for a student with severe intellectual disabilities may be related to expressive and receptive communication, thus overlapping the curriculum areas of science and communication within the same activity. These approaches require activity-based learning and therefore a shift away from more traditional large group instruction where most students remain passive while a teacher lectures. When instruction is activity-based there are boundless opportunities to creatively address a wide range of learning needs within shared activities (Giangreco, Cloninger, Dennis & Edelman, 2002).

### **Peer Supports**

Peers can offer both planned and incidental opportunities to enhance social and academic learning. Encouraging classmates with and without disabilities to exchange academic, social, and other supports as they work together within shared classroom experiences creates opportunities to extend learning. Facilitating constructive peer relationships is central to establishing a sense of belonging in the classroom that can be foundational to success. A strong research base exists demonstrating the positive impact of peer supports for students with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms (Carter, Cushing & Kennedy, 2009).

Yet these positive peer interactions can be facilitated or hindered by environmental, curricular, and instructional actions taken by the adults in the classroom. Therefore, it is important to always consider how adult actions might impact peer supports and relationships. School personnel can facilitate peer supports by: (a) identifying students with and without disabilities who might benefit from peer supports; (b) providing orientation for students about their roles and responsibilities to each other; (c) providing opportunities for students to work and interact together; (d) offering ongoing support to students so they feel confident and well-prepared in their roles; and (e) monitoring all students' progress to ensure they are reaping the intended academic and social benefits of peer supports (Carter et al., 2009).

Often students without disabilities can effectively and naturally provide some supports to their classmates with disabilities that might usually be provided by adults -- such opportunities should be continuously explored (Carter et al., 2009). It is important to clarify that peer support strategies should be embedded within a larger framework of high quality inclusive practices. They are intended to supplement, not supplant, support appropriately provided by school personnel.

## Self-Determination

In the disability community in North America there is a saying, "Nothing about me without me!" Ensuring students with disabilities have a voice in decisions about their own lives is a lifelong process that should start at a young age by giving students the same types of choices as their peers without disabilities and continuing over time by providing them with progressively more sophisticated choices and decisions consistent with their age and cultural context. It starts by sending the simple yet powerful message to our students that they are capable of making decisions, allowing them to have some measure of control and get what they want from life.

Wehmeyer (2007) suggests a series of steps school personnel and families can take to facilitate self-determination. He encourages teams to avoid traditional deficit-based approaches in favor of building on a student's strengths and unique abilities. He reminds us of the importance of empowering students to make decisions. In part this means we must be prepared to honor their decisions and allow them to take risks. We can structure our classrooms to actively teach skills such as problem-solving, decision-making, goal-setting, self-advocacy, and self-regulation that are vital to developing self-determination.

Sometimes self-determination involves interdependence with classmates and also can be advanced with the use of technology (e.g., pre-programmed phone numbers in a cell phone; digital calendar as a memory aid). At the stage that students without disabilities are making decisions about their own schooling (e.g., which type of high school to attend), so too can students with disabilities be more fully engaged in these decisions and also provide valuable input about whether the services being provided to them are helpful and desired or not. Ultimately, the quality of our students' lives during their school years and beyond can be substantially improved through chronologically-age appropriate self-determination.

## Conclusion

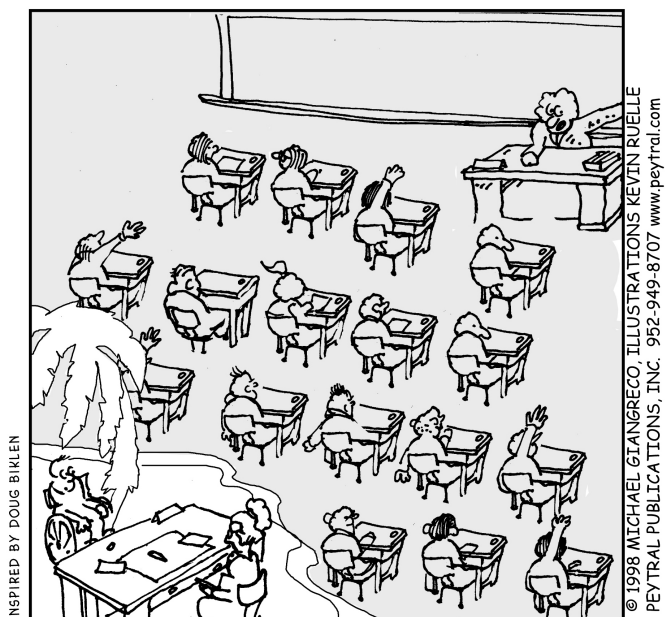
Inclusive educational experiences are designed to enhance valued life outcomes for students by seeking an individualized balance between both the academic–functional and social–personal aspects of schooling. Implementing inclusive education at the classroom level requires thoughtful attention to at least four interrelated components, including ongoing access to (a) inclusive environments, (b) meaningful curriculum, (c) effective instruction, and (d) necessary supports (Giangreco, 2011). As teams identify appropriate learning outcomes based on assessed needs, we also need to create opportunities for students to surprise us with their yet-to-be-discovered interests, abilities and talents. This helps avoid underestimating students with disabilities – a problem that continues to impede their progress and obscure their potential. Combining high quality curricular, instructional, and support components within inclusive classrooms holds the greatest potential for brighter futures for students with and without disabilities.

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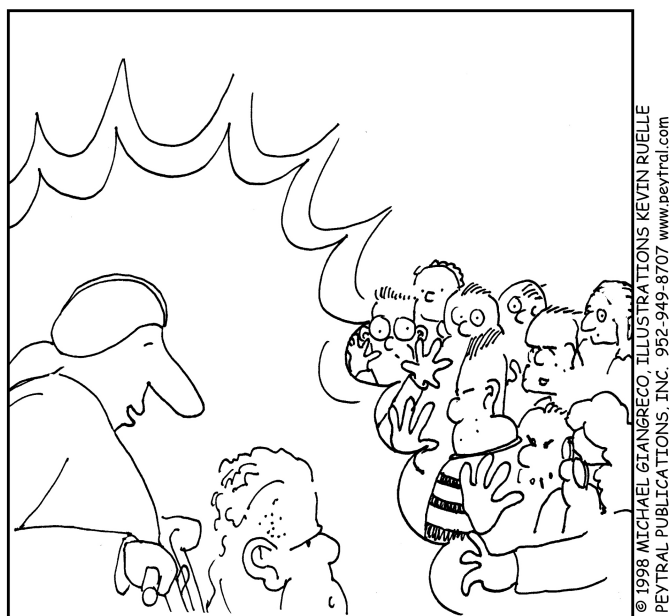
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Figure 1



**ISLAND IN THE MAINSTREAM**  
MRS. JONES AND MRS. COOPER ARE STILL TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY FRED DOESN'T FEEL LIKE PART OF THE CLASS.

Figure 2



JOEY NOTICED A MYSTERIOUS FORCE FIELD AROUND HIS ASSISTANT THAT CHILDREN COULD NOT BREAK THROUGH.

## Appendix E: Article Submitted for Publication Review

### Integrazione Scolastica in Italy: A Compilation of English-Language Resources

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November 25, 2011

We thank and acknowledge the generosity of the many school personnel; agency personnel, students and parents who took their valuable time to welcome us in their schools and communities so that we might better understand Italian culture, schooling, and *integrazione scolastica*. We especially wish to thank the following individuals, all Italian colleagues knowledgeable about the education of students with disabilities, who reviewed and provided feedback on the: (a) introduction, (b) glossary explanations, (c) timeline entries, and (d) web sites, to ensure that they were as complete and accurate as possible at the time of preparation: Rosalinda Cassibba (University of Bari), Giuseppina Castellini (Centro Territoriale Risorse per la Disabilità, Monza Est), Simone Consegna (Associazione Italiana Persone Down, Roma), Cesare Cornoldi (University of Padova), Simona D'Alessio (European Agency for Special Needs Education), Santo DiNuovo (University of Catania), Daniela Lucangeli (University of Padova), Irene Mammarella (University of Padova), Laura Nota (University of Padova), Paola Palladino (University of Pavia), Grazia Redaelli (Istituto d'Istruzione Superiore Virgilio Floriani, Vimercate), Salvatore Soresi (University of Padova), Renzo Paola Vedova (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione Ufficio Scolastico Regionale per il Vento: Ufficio Scolastico Provinciale di Padova), and Renzo Vianello (University of Padova).

### Abstract

Italy has a four-decade history of placing students with disabilities in general education classes, historically referred to as *integrazione scolastica*. Since Italy relies less on the use of special education schools and classrooms than many other similarly developed countries, its practices and policies have been and continue to be of interest to the international community. Following an introduction, the current paper offers a compilation of English-language resources on this topic divided into four main parts: (a) a glossary of terms related to Italian schools and *integrazione scolastica*, (b) a timeline of educational events (e.g., legislation), (c) a three-part bibliography of relevant scholarship with selected annotation (i.e., 2000-2011), and (d) Italian and European web sites, in both English and Italian, pertaining to *integrazione scolastica*, inclusive education, and disability. This summarization of resources from 1987 to 2011 was undertaken as part of a three-month sabbatical to learn about *integrazione scolastica* in Italy. The compilation is not designed to be evaluative, but rather to provide a contemporary summary for others interested in this topic. By better understanding the successes and challenges of *integrazione scolastica* we hoped it would help us and others reflect on educational challenges we face in our own countries and lead to constructive improvements.

### Integrazione Scolastica in Italy: A Compilation of English-Language Resources

Italy is among the most visited countries in world -- renowned for its art and design, architecture and engineering, culture, food, and *la dolce vita* (the sweet life). A founding member of the European Union and member of the G8, G20, and NATO, as of 2011 it was ranked as the world's 23rd most developed country, high on the Human Development Index 0.854, 8th in the world rankings on the International Quality of Life Index, and with a high public education and literacy level of nearly 97%. What is less known to the general public outside of Italy is that for over three decades this popular Mediterranean country has reported including among the highest proportion of its students with disabilities in general education classes and among the smallest use of special classes and special schools in the world. Therefore, Italian policies and practices have been, and continue to be, of interest to the international community involved in extending inclusive educational opportunities for children and youth with disabilities and other special educational needs.

This resource compilation was initiated as a foundational step in preparing for a three-month sabbatical stay in Italy (September-November 2011) to study the policies and practices of including students with disabilities in general education classes, historically referred to in Italy as *integrazione scolastica*. Recently there have been conversations within Italy about whether a term such as *inclusive education* should replace *integrazione scolastica*. For some people the terms are considered almost synonymous and are used interchangeably. For others the phrases have quite different meanings especially from a cross-cultural perspective. Among those who see the terminology as different, there is not agreement about which choice of language reflects a higher level of practice. Some have argued that *integrazione scolastica* focuses exclusively on students with disabilities, whereas inclusive education encompasses a wider range of diversity (e.g., disability, special educational needs, economic differences, use of non-dominant language, immigration, adoption); yet even this is complicated by the fact that no single definition of inclusive education has been agreed upon nationally or internationally. People do seem to agree that regardless of what you call it, it means much more than simply placement of a student with a disability in a general education class. Although agreeing on terminology can be helpful, what are more important are the types and qualities of the practices put in place to operationalize quality education for all students.

This resource compilation is divided into four main parts: (a) a glossary of terms related to Italian schools and *integrazione scolastica*, (b) a timeline of educational events (e.g., legislation), (c) a bibliography of relevant scholarship with selected annotation, and (d) Italian and European web sites, in both English and Italian, pertaining to *integrazione scolastica*, inclusive education, and disability. The purpose in compiling and reviewing resources about *integrazione scolastica* was to gain a preliminary understanding of this social policy initiative so that it might inform our observations and interactions while in Italy. Since *integrazione scolastica* was initiated and developed within a highly specific cultural and historic context, it is uniquely Italian. Our hope was that better understanding the successes and challenges of *integrazione scolastica* could help us reflect on educational challenges we face in our own country. A secondary purpose was to make this work available to others interested in these same topics. Our purpose has never been to critique *integrazione scolastica* or to conduct a cross-cultural comparison, but rather to compile English-language resources that would extend what is currently available and to identify potential elements of *integrazione scolastica* that might inform our own practices.

The glossary entries reflect a combination of information gleaned from the reviewed English-language literature and have been further informed by conversations and interactions with over a hundred Italian colleagues (e.g., university faculty, provincial ministry of education personnel, school administrators, teachers, special educators, agency personnel, parents of children with disabilities) in September, October and November of 2011 as we visited four universities and 16 schools in five regions of Italy (i.e., Lazio, Lombardia, Puglia, Sicilia, Veneto) and met with people at conferences in two other regions (i.e., Toscana, Emilia-Romagna). In addition, a subset of 14 of these colleagues reviewed the entries for accuracy.

In reference to available scholarship, we identified English-language sources about *integrazione scolastica* published between 1987 and 2011. Relying on English-language literature is a significant limitation, since certainly the Italian language literature is far more extensive, yet we felt it most appropriate to review literature that was in our primary language in an effort to minimize errors associated with translation and cultural meaning. Given the limited number of English-language resources we included a wide range of sources such as books, book chapters, journal articles, newsletter articles, and web-published reports that we divided into three main categories. First, since much of the identified literature from 1987 to 1999 (n=12) recounts the early history of Italy's transition to general class placement for students with disabilities and has been repeated in part or whole by several authors, we have chosen to list, but not annotate, sources from this period since many of the key points are summarized in a subset of the glossary entries (e.g., *classi differenziali*, *integrazione scolastica*, *inserimento selvaggio*) and in the timeline. Second, we provide an annotated bibliography for more recent sources from 2000 to 2011 (n=20). Authors of these sources included primarily Italian scholars (n=22), as well as a few non-Italian Europeans (n=5) and Americans (n=3) who either collaborated with Italian colleagues or who visited and studied *integrazione scolastica* in Italy. Third, we have included a list of related sources (n=25) from 1991 to 2011 that are not explicitly about *integrazione scolastica* in Italy, but which provide contextually relevant information.

It is our hope that the compilation of these resources will assist others who are interested in exploring *integrazione scolastica* in Italy by providing an accurate summary of the currently available English-language resources. Perhaps learning lessons from its history and contemporary status will inform practices anywhere people are striving to improve inclusive educational opportunities and outcomes for students. Like all national descriptions of education practices, as one might expect there are variations in implementation from region to region and school to school. Additionally, we have undertaken this exploration of *integrazione scolastica* at a time of serious economic challenges globally, and particularly in Italy. In part this means that some of what was written just a few years ago may be different today as a result of economic hardships the changing political landscape that have affected funding, resources, and policies in Italian schools. As mentioned earlier, this resource compilation can provide preliminary information to better understand Italian *integrazione scolastica*, but readers are cautioned that it should not be considered comprehensive because of the absence of Italian-language literature. As we attempted to understand an education system that was foreign to us, metaphorically, our initial view was somewhat blurry. As each day of our three-month journey progressed, the image came increasingly into focus. We know that our understanding of the Italian education system and particularly *integrazione scolastica* is still incomplete, but what we can say with confidence is that it is much clearer to us today than it was when we began our journey. Several of our new Italian colleagues have confirmed for us that we have grasped many of the system's unique



characteristics and reminded us that this new learning is no small feat, because as so many Italians told us about their education system, "it's complicated".

### Glossary of Key Terms

#### **Asilo nido**

This refers to *nursery* or daycare for children from 3 months up to 3 years of age.

#### **Assistente**

An assistente (*assistant*) for a student with a disability in Italian classrooms can be referred to in a variety of ways. For example, they are sometimes referred to as an OSA (Operatore Socio Assistenziale), OSS (Operatore Socio Sanitario), or ASA (Assistente Socio Assistenziale). Training can be obtained in vocational high schools to become an assistant. These individuals are funded and provided through the health system, though some work in schools. In some regions these assistants do not work primarily in schools, but support individuals with disabilities in their homes, at a CDD (Centro Diurno Disabili/Disability Daycare Centers), or at a CSE (Centro Socio Educativi/Social Educational Centers). The stated role of these types of assistants in schools is to provide primarily personal care supports such as feeding, dressing, mobility, and bathroom assistance for students with disabilities. In these cases, their roles are explicitly designed to be noninstructional.

Based on a 1999 collective agreement called the *Contratto Collettivo Nazionale Lavoro* [Collective Contract of National Work] between the National School Trade Union and the Italian Ministry of Public Instruction, in some schools custodians, called *collaboratori scolastici* (school collaborators), who primarily have roles cleaning and maintaining the school, also provide personal care supports like dressing, mobility and bathroom assistance for students with disabilities. In the past these personnel were referred to as *bidelli* (janitors). Although this term is still in use, many individuals in this role do not favor it. School collaborators are one part of a larger designation of school support personnel referred to as ATA (Assistente Tecnico Amministrativo) that can include administrative assistants and others who provide technical, administrative or auxiliary supports in schools.

Some assistants have roles to provide educational, social/behavioral, or communication supports for students with disabilities, such as those referred to as AEC meaning either Assistente per l'Educazione e la Comunicazione (Assistants for Education and Communication), Assistente Educativo Culturale (Educational Cultural Assistants), or by other regional titles. While these individuals often engage in some of the same noninstructional roles (e.g., personal hygiene, mobility) as the previously mentioned types of assistants, they may also be asked to provide some level of instructional support or provide supports designed to advance student autonomy. These types of assistants are often recruited and hired by local organizations called *Cooperative Sociali* (Social Cooperatives). Individuals engaging in this role do not necessarily have a standard training to prepare them for this work and have a wide range of credentials. All of these types of assistant roles typically receive a low wage.

#### **Bisogni educativi speciali (BES)**

The phrase *special educational needs* has been introduced in Italy as a general category referring to students who are not labeled as disabled, meaning they do not possess an Italian *Certificazione di Disabilità* (*Certificate of Disability*) (see glossary entry), but who experience difficulties in learning and who may require individualized learning supports or interventions. Presently by some scholars in the field use this term, though it is not commonly used by very many teachers.

### **Certificazione di disabilità**

A *certification of disability*, based on the assessment of a team of professionals from various disciplines, is issued by a medical/legal board at the local health authority to establish that a student has an eligible disability under Italian law and regulations. This makes the student eligible and entitled to receive an individually determined program and services in school from a support teacher called an *insegnante di sostegno* (see glossary entry) and other identified service providers. Under the Italian system, students may be identified as "disabled" under the following categories: (a) deaf or hearing impaired, (b) blind or visually impaired, and (c) "psicofisico" including orthopedically impaired, intellectually impaired, and multiply impaired; in a small number of cases students with severe learning disabilities or emotional disturbance are certified as disabled under this umbrella category and receive the support of an *insegnante di sostegno*. Increasingly the identification relies on the World Health Organization's *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF); see web link. The current process for the assessment and identification of disabilities is described in Law 185/2006 and in the *Guidelines for the School Integration of Students with Disabilities* (Linee guida per l'integrazione scolastica degli alunni con disabilità); see web link.

Notably, Italy does not generally consider students with "learning disabilities" (as the term is used in the United States) to be "disabled". Similarly, Italy does not have a separate disability category for "emotional disturbance", although students may be identified with any variety of behavior disorders based on diagnoses from the DSM-IV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) or the ICD-10 (*International Classification of Diseases*). Typically such a classification does not qualify a student as "disabled" and entitled to the support of an *insegnante di sostegno*. Many students considered to have high-incidence or mild disabilities in the US are not labeled "disabled" in Italy, resulting in only approximately 2% to 2.5% of the school-aged population being labeled disabled and therefore entitled to special educational services in Italy. Although as stated earlier, mechanisms do exist for these students to be certified as disabled in a relatively small number of situations.

### **Classi differenziali**

Throughout the 1950's and into the 1970's, prior to the movement referred to as *integrazione scolastica* (see glossary entry), there was substantial migration of Italian families from the southern to central and northern regions of the country and from rural to urban areas. The numerous and distinctive regional dialectics present in Italy at that time led to learning problems for many children who had relocated. Initially the Italian response was to establish separate, *differential classes* for students with learning difficulties such as dialectical language and writing differences. Most of these students were not disabled as we think about the term today, though some had learning and behavioral problems and some may also have had disabilities. Many of these children were socioeconomically disadvantaged. The number of these classes steadily increased throughout the 1960's, reaching a high of 4,743 classes by the 1968-69 school year. Such classes were dismantled and have not existed in Italy since the 1977 (Law 517).

### **Disturbo specifico dell'apprendimento (DSA)**

*Specific Disorders of Learning* are what would commonly be referred to in the US as "Specific Learning Disabilities". In Italy students identified through assessment as DSA are taught in general education classes and are not certified or considered "disabled" within the Italian education system. They are not entitled to special education, although new legislation in 2010 (Law 170) is designed to ensure that general education teachers make necessary

accommodations for these children, such as those with dyslexia, dysgraphia, and dyscalculia.

### **Diversamente abile**

*Differently-abled* is a phrase that some people are using in an effort to encourage the idea that all people, not just those with disabilities, have a range of skills and needs that affect their ability to participate in various activities and which require interdependence with others in the society. It encourages the recognition that all people have some abilities. The phrase is in limited use among a few organizations in Italy and sometimes appears in the popular press. It has received mixed acceptance; while some see it as a positive progression in language use, some disability organizations and others oppose the use of the term, perceiving it as simply a euphemism for current and older terminology (e.g., disabled, handicapped).

### **Educatore**

An *educatore* (*educator*), in the broadest sense of the word, may refer to anyone who is involved in education and therefore it does not necessarily reflect a specific level within the profession. Commonly in Italy the term is used to refer to some types of personnel whose role is to work with individuals who have special needs of various types (e.g., disability, economic disadvantage) both in school and nonschool settings. This title is associated with wide variation in both roles and preparation based on student needs, context, and localities. It should be noted that when the term *educatore* is used in this way, it refers to an individual who is different than a teacher -- the roles are not interchangeable and follow different preparation paths. *Educatori* are not trained or certified as a primary or secondary teacher or in a subject area (e.g., math, science, history, language). They are assigned to work directly with a student who has disabilities for a designated number of hours per week to provide supports with the aim of advancing student autonomy. Unlike teachers and *insegnante di sostegno*, *educatori* are not employed by schools; they are typically funded by local municipalities often through local social cooperatives. For students in primary schools, some *educatori* may spend some time at school as well as after school. For students in secondary school, *educatori* more commonly work with a student after school hours. In the best case scenarios they serve as a facilitator or bridge between the school, community, work, and home by assisting with homework, sports activities, social events/interactions, community travel (e.g., use of public transportation), and providing respite for families. *Educatori* do not necessarily always work in situations that advance *integrazione scolastica* or inclusive education. Some work with older adolescents and adults in day centers that serve only or primarily individuals with disabilities.

Some individuals referred to as *educatori* have no more than a high school education and minimal additional preparation (e.g., a workshop) specifically for their role. In some regions (e.g., Sicily), individuals can receive training to be *educatori* in secondary schools. Others have university degrees through programs offered in Departments of Educational Sciences throughout Italy following one of two primary paths: (a) disability across the life span, or (b) individuals with psychosocial concerns. The disability related path offers training on topics such as historical and cultural foundations, development across the life span, characteristics of disabilities, working with families, and learning strategies/processes. Depending on a student's characteristics some *educatori* may also have specific training, such as in applied behavior analysis for students with autism or pertaining to sensory disabilities (e.g., Italian sign language for individuals who are deaf, orientation and mobility training to assist individuals who are blind). Some localities only hire *educatori* with university degrees in Educational Sciences, Psychology or related fields while others do not.

Typically, municipalities, regional, or provincial governments pay for the *educatori*

(directly or indirectly through cooperatives or other agencies), though sometimes they are funded by disability-related organizations such as those for persons who are blind. Despite higher educational levels of some educatori, their compensation is lower (e.g., €6 to €7 per hour, in some cases more) than that of teachers and insegnante di sostegno. The role of an educatore should not be confused with an insegnante di sostegno (see glossary entry), although at times when both are involved with the same student (often employed by different organizations) role confusion reportedly may result.

### **Insegnante di sostegno**

An insegnante di sostegno is a *specialized support teacher* who is assigned to support one or more general education classrooms where students with certified disabilities are present. By design, the intention is for the insegnante di sostegno to be a support to the classroom, and in a broader sense to the whole school, rather than being assigned exclusively to an individual student; the law does not limit how they can be deployed. They are assigned to provide the same amount of instructional time as their general education counterparts. The remainder of their time is dedicated to planning, instructional preparation, collaboration with team members, and other duties. Although, their primary role is to support the classroom teacher in teaching and including the student with a disability, they may also provide support to other students, such as those with special educational needs who are not certified as disabled (e.g., DSA; see glossary entry), and can also work with children who do not have special needs in effort to free up classroom teachers to interact directly with students who have disabilities, thus avoiding stigmatizing students with disabilities.

Historically, the amount of training for insegnante di sostegno has paralleled the training requirements for general classroom teachers based on their grade level, primary or secondary, plus additional training to be an insegnante di sostegno. This meant that up until approximately five years ago insegnante di sostegno for elementary schools took a two-year training course post high school because, at that time, one could be an elementary teacher in Italy without a university degree. Undoubtedly, some individuals in this role had educational levels that exceeded the minimum requirements. Insegnante di sostegno in middle and high schools took the same two-year training, but after a Bachelor's degree, because that was the requirement to teach in the middle and high school grades at that time.

Currently, insegnante di sostegno at all grade levels are required to have a bachelor's degree and be a certified teacher, after which they take an additional year of study to be an insegnante di sostegno based on a set of nationally established training topics. Changes which increased the requirements to be an insegnante di sostegno coincided with new laws and structures that established the formation of Departments of Educational Sciences in Italian universities that were charged with the primary responsibility for preparing insegnante di sostegno.

Historically, insegnante di sostegno have chosen training in one of two paths: (a) physical or sensory disabilities with further distinction between preparation to support students with vision or hearing impairments, or (b) intellectual disabilities. They may take additional studies to gain specializations related to the needs of students with specific types of disabilities (e.g., autism). As of October 2011, the Ministry of Education is in the process of developing new rules for the preparation of insegnante di sostegno, which currently are not available. During this waiting period university training programs to prepare new insegnante di sostegno are on hold and will take a couple of years to phase-in once they are initiated. Training requirements for engaging in the role of insegnante di sostegno continue to evolve. Current law limits the caseload of insegnante di sostegno to a maximum of four students with disabilities, though the national

average is closer to two, with regional variation. Given current economic pressures, there is concern that this may be changing. There is a substantial amount of turnover among *insegnante di sostegno* because many in this role move on to become general education classroom teachers after 4 to 5 years.

### **Inserimento selvaggio**

*Wild insertion* refers to the period between 1971 and 1977. Based on a grassroots movement in Italy to close segregated special schools and psychiatric hospitals, the percentage of students with disabilities placed in general education classes rose from estimates of 20% to 30% to approximately 98%. Law 118 aided the widespread shift of students with disabilities from special schools and classes to general education classes. This reportedly led to challenges in schools because wholesale shifts were made without necessarily having sufficient transition plans, supports, and trained personnel in place; though as special schools closed their specialized teachers, with skills and knowledge of children with disabilities, were placed in some schools as supports.

Some scholars have argued that this period of wild insertion was necessary because if they delayed implementation until they had fully developed plans, the implementation for such a wide range of students may have never happened. Scholars suggest that wild insertion forced school personnel to figure out how they would solve the new challenges they confronted and created the conditions for subsequent progress. This challenging period stimulated the conversations and ideas that ultimately led to the passage of the landmark Law 517 in 1977. It provided a series of service delivery parameters to support *integrazione scolastica* such as: (a) specially trained support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*) were to be paired with classroom teachers with the intention that they would work together to improve educational opportunities for all students, thus mitigating stigma for students with disabilities; (b) no more than 20 students were to be in classes that included a student with a disability, and (c) extracurricular activities must provide access for all students.

### **Integrazione scolastica**

In the 1970s a grassroots movement emerged protesting discrimination, inequalities, and segregation of people with disabilities that led to the widespread national closure of special education schools and classrooms across Italy in favor of general education class placement and education for students with the full range of disabilities; this came to be known as "*integrazione scolastica*" (*scholastic integration*). This shift and associated supports were codified in a series of laws, the most foundational of which were: Law 118 (1971), Law 517 (1977), and Law 104 (1992). Philosophically, *integrazione scolastica* is meant to offer reciprocal interaction and mutual benefits for students with and without disabilities to learn together and from each other to contribute to a more inclusive society, consistent with the Italian constitution.

For many years, Italy has reported that approximately 98% of students with disabilities are educated in general education classes with the support of *insegnante di sostegno* (see glossary entry). In considering this statistic, it is important to understand what information it does and does not provide. The statistic indicates that 98% of Italian students with certified disabilities (approximately 2% of the school-aged population) attend general education classes in regular schools some percentage of the school day. These schools typically do not have full-day special education classes as a primary placement option. The statistic does not indicate the percentage of time students actually spend in those general education classrooms versus the percentage of time they spend outside general education classrooms receiving services individually or in groups with other students who have disabilities. Recent research in Italy has begun to clarify that fewer

than 98% of these students spend all or most (at least 80%) of their day inside the general education classrooms (see web link: *L'integrazione Scolastica nella Percezione degli Insegnanti: School Integration the Perceptions of Teachers*). These data are based on a sample of self-reports from school personnel. The 2% of students with disabilities not included in general education classes are primarily students who are deaf, blind, or have the most profound/multiple disabilities.

Currently the term "integrazione scolastica" is widely used in Italy, yet some Italian scholars, school personnel, and families have encouraged the adoption of variation on the phrase "inclusive education" because they believe it more accurately reflects the next and higher level of integration of students with disabilities. Additionally, proponents of the term inclusive education, suggest that it may facilitate the development of shared language and meaning within the European community and internationally. Proponents of retaining the terminology of *integrazione scolastica* argue that it has cultural and linguistic meaning and a connotation that is different and more positive than inclusive education in the Italian language. Currently, there seems to be no national consensus on this issue. For some people it is a non-issue because they consider the terms synonymous, using them interchangeably. To these people, while they acknowledge that reaching agreement on terminology can be helpful, they are less concerned with the label and more concerned about the types and qualities of practices being used to ensure quality education for all students.

### **Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione per l'innovazione e la Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE)**

This refers to the *National Institute of Documentation for Innovation and Educational Research*.

### **Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema di Istruzione (INValSI)**

The *National Institute for the Evaluation of the Education System* is charged with developing a new system of school evaluation and gathering of data on school and student performance.

### **Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR)**

The *Ministry of Instruction of the University of Research* was formerly referred to as the national Ministry of Education.

### **Orientamento scolastico**

*Vocational counseling* in schools (or in private centers) refers to support provided by vocational counselors (consulenti di orientamento) or teachers with specific training, to assist individuals in choosing their subsequent level of schooling. For example, vocational counseling is provided as students are completing middle school (scuola secondaria I) to assist them in choosing the type of high school (secondaria II) they will attend (liceo, technical, professional). Similarly, as students complete high school (secondaria II), vocational counseling is provided to assist them in making decisions about attending university, other post-secondary education, or work and facilitating that transition. Recently, there has been more emphasis on embedding concept of "orientamento educativo" (vocational education) in general education programs by introducing vocational education earlier in a student's academic career to help them develop skills designed to prepare them to make those future choices. Vocational counseling is considered especially important for individuals with disabilities so they are prepared to make more informed and self-determined choices about their future.

**Piano educativo individuale (PEI)**

The *Individual Education Plan* is developed by a team for students with certified disabilities.

**Scuola**

*School* is divided into four levels, each described in subsequent entries: (a) scuola dell'infanzia, (b) scuola primaria, (c) scuola secondaria I, and (d) scuola secondaria II. There are several notable points that are unique to Italian schools - we address eight here that we thought most interesting. In considering the following points it is important to recognize that Italy's system of education is directed at the national level, not by regions or localities. First, school principals/headmasters (*presido*) are often responsible to oversee and lead multiple schools. Given Italy's economic situation the number of schools a single individual is asked to lead has increased in recent years. Second, although schools at the various levels are in session for students the same minimum number of hours per week, local schools in conjunction with families in their communities can decide whether students attend school more than the minimum number of hours as well as whether those hours are spread out Monday through Friday or Monday through Saturday. Sometimes multiple options are available within the same school. For example, some students may attend their classes five days a week and others at the same school may attend six days. In other schools, if a sufficient number of parents request it, there could be as many as four options, where students attend school varying numbers of hours (e.g., 24, 27, 30 or 40 hours per week), all in the same school. This is one of the key areas where schools and communities do have local control.

Third, although many students attend the schools closest to their homes, they have options to attend other public schools. Fourth, because of Italy's unique geographical and architectural history, while some new schools exist, it is not uncommon to find older historical buildings being used as schools. For example, sometimes schools are literally a palace (*palazzo*) -- being housed in former palatial residences. This offers both unique opportunities (e.g., historic art and architecture) and challenges (e.g., accessibility, upkeep) because the physical plant of the building and its maintenance often is controlled by a different entity than the school, such as the local municipality. Fifth, all teachers within a school, regardless of their role (e.g., classroom teacher, insegnante di sostegno) have exactly the same number of instructional contact hours with students (e.g., 22 hours per week in primary school, 18 hours per week in secondary school).

Sixth, interscholastic sports do not exist in Italy. Children and youth, many of whom do engage in sports, do so through clubs, churches, and town teams. Seventh, support services (e.g., physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech/language pathology) typically are not part of special education services provided by schools. These services typically are provided for students after school hours by other agencies in nonschool settings. In a small number of cases, Italian law allows for students with severe disabilities to receive some of these therapy services during part of the school day (e.g., the first hour or two of the school day), but they are typically provided away from school at a health clinic or agency that provides services to individuals with disabilities. The extent of coordination and collaboration between the schools and these agencies varies widely. The supports provided may or may not be educationally necessary or relevant.

Eighth, Italy has a unique national method of assigning teachers to schools based a wide variety of criteria among licensed educators. We will not attempt to describe all the details of this process except to say that it differs quite substantially from typical hiring practices in some other countries. For example, there is no search committee or interview process and building principals

or local boards do not make decisions about who will work in their school. Certified teachers are included on a single provincial list. They can make a request to be placed on a different provincial list for any variety reasons (e.g., more job opportunities, family move, personal preference), but can be only on one list at a time. If selected for a position at a school they can accept or reject this assignment. In some cases this can make it difficult for schools to plan ahead because they do not necessarily know who will be on their staff during an upcoming school year. Because the list generally favors teachers with more years of experience, though other factors are considered, some teachers may have 20 to 25 years of experience before they have stable teaching positions that are not in jeopardy of changing annually. For example, younger teachers may be offered a series of annual contracts and also may seek positions that are in different regions of the country (e.g., a teacher who lives in southern Italy may be seek a teaching job in northern Italy where positions are more abundant). Turnover can be especially pronounced for specialized support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*). A substantial number of individuals choose this teaching role because more jobs are available and it provides a potentially faster path to gaining a stable general education teacher position. After being an *insegnante di sostegno* for a required 5 years, those individuals who then submit requests for general education teacher positions are given preference.

### **Scuola dell'infanzia**

*Preschool/Kindergarten* (3 years) is available for children ages 3 to 6, though is not compulsory; it was formerly referred to as *scuola materna*.

### **Scuola primaria**

*Primary School* (5 years) is for children ages 6 to 11; it was formerly referred to as *scuola elementare* (elementary school).

### **Scuola secondaria I**

*Secondary school I* (3 years) is for youth ages 11 to 14; it was formerly referred to as *scuola media* (middle school). As students complete the third and final year of *scuola secondaria I* (8th grade), a combination of assessment information about the student is used to orient them toward a recommended type of *scuola secondaria II*.

**Scuola secondaria II:** *Secondary School II* (5 years) is for youth ages 15 to 19; it was formerly referred to as *Scuola Superiore* (High School). These high schools include three basic types: (a) professional, (b) technical, and (c) liceo (e.g., classico [*classics*], musicale [*music*], scientifico [*science*], linguistico [*language*], umanistico [*humanities*]). Students do not necessarily attend the high school closest to their home. High school students attend class for 30 hours per week. This may be 6 hours each of 5 days, but more typically is 5 hours over 6 days, including school on Saturday.

A small percentage of high school students with moderate to severe or multiple disabilities spend less than 30 hours per week at school. These students may spend a full school day once a week or parts of each school day (e.g., 2 hrs.) at various types of centers serving only individuals with disabilities. There they may receive various types of training or support (e.g., communication support, physical therapy, occupational therapy, applied behavior analysis therapy, vocational preparation). Additionally, others may attend centers or participate in programs for individuals with disabilities run by local social cooperatives.

Under Italian law school is compulsory until age 16 for all students. If students leave school at 16, having not graduated, they may choose to work. In such cases, employers are obliged by law to provide a formative path of vocational development (e.g., training and mentoring in the profession) for two years. If students later decide to pursue university studies



they must take and pass a state exam. Students with disabilities who meet state graduation requirements receive a scuola secondaria II diploma, whereas those who have not met those standards receive a certificate of attendance that is designed to look similar to a regular diploma, though it carries a different meaning.

### **Timeline of Key Events Related to Education and Integrazione Scolastica**

The following 50-year timeline, 1960-2010, has an earlier context rooted Italy's 20th century history. The adoption of the 1947 Democratic Constitution of the Italian Republic declared itself to be "built on the Resistance". In other words, the liberated political factions opposed to Mussolini during World War II sought to craft a constitution that was the antithesis of his fascist regime. The following are excerpts of key provisions from the Italian constitution related to education and that later would help form some of the basis and legal support for integrazione scolastica.

#### *Article 3:*

All citizens have equal social dignity and are equal before the law, without distinction of sex, race, language, religion, political opinions, personal and social conditions. It is the duty of the Republic to remove those obstacles of an economic and social nature which, really limiting the freedom and equality of citizens, impede the full development of the human person and the effective participation of all workers in the political, economic and social organization of the country.

#### *Article 30:*

It is the duty and right of parents to support, instruct and educate their children...

#### *Article 33:*

Art and science are free and teaching them is free. The Republic lays down general rules for education and establishes State schools for all kinds and grades....

#### *Article 34:*

Schools are open to everyone....

#### *Article 38:*

Disabled and handicapped persons are entitled to receive education and vocational training.

### **1960 through 1969**

In the 1960's a number of acts were passed by the Italian Parliament creating a segregated system of public education for students with disabilities (e.g., residential institutions, special schools, special classes). During this time Italy also experienced substantial internal migration from south to north and from the country to cities. Differences in regional dialects led to learning problems and the establishment of special classes and schools (see Glossary: *Classi Differenziali*). In 1963-64 the number of these special classes had risen to 2,247 and steadily increased throughout the decade, reaching 4,743 by 1968-69. In the mid 1960s only about 20% of students with disabilities were educated in general education classes. By the late 1960's a strong, grassroots, anti-segregation movement emerged as part of a political and social movement centered on guaranteeing fundamental human rights. A key figure during this period was Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia, who expressed intense criticism of the health system as a cultural stronghold of the existing political establishment that he and others identified as contrary to the good of the Italian people.

### **1970 through 1979**

As the decade began protests continued against special schools as discriminatory and segregated while the number of special classes associated with regional dialectic and learning

difference (classi differenziali) continued to rise, peaking at 6,790 in the 1973-74 school year. The 1971 passage of Law 118 began the tradition of educating students with disabilities in general education classes in public schools, first at the primary and lower secondary school levels. It addressed the education system, as well as: (a) the establishment of Centers of Rehabilitation, Research and Prevention, (b) elimination of architectural barriers, (c) employment issues for persons with disabilities, and (d) a social benefits system for persons with disabilities (e.g., Disability Living Allowance). Although the result of the law led to the widespread closure of special education schools, it did not completely eliminate them. Section 28(i) of the law left open the possibility for some continued separate schooling: "*Compulsory education must take place in regular schools, in public schools, except in those cases in which the subject suffers from severe intellectual deficiency or from physical handicaps so great as to impede or render very difficult the learning processes in the regular classroom.*" In 1975 Ministerial Circular law (Circolare 227) explicitly stated that the severity of the disability must not prevent integration. Subsequent legislation would further strengthen the Italian commitment to general education class placement for students with disabilities.

Between 1971 and 1977 the percentage of students with disabilities placed in general education classes rose from estimates in the 20% to 30% range to over 90%; this was referred to as the period of "wild insertion" (see glossary entry: inserimento selvaggio). This widespread shift of students with disabilities from special schools and classes to general education classes reportedly led to logically expected challenges because schools made wholesale changes without necessarily having sufficient transition plans, supports, and trained personnel in place. Some scholars have argued that this rapid insertion was necessary because if they delayed implementation until they had fully developed plans, the implementation for such a wide range of students may have never happened. Scholars suggest that rapid insertion forced school personnel to figure out how they would solve the new challenges they confronted.

In 1977 Law 517 was passed establishing that schools cannot legally refuse any student with a disability and set forth a series of service delivery parameters such as: (a) no more than 20 students in a class that includes a student with a disability, (b) extracurricular activities must allow access for all students, and (c) specially trained support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*) were to be paired with classroom teachers with the intention that they would work together to improve educational opportunities for all students, thus mitigating stigma for students with disabilities. One implication of the law was that the supportive aspects did not apply to classes where students with disabilities were not enrolled, meaning other classes, many likely to include students with other types of special learning needs (e.g., learning disabilities, children of migrant workers, economically disadvantaged) would be in larger classes and without special education personnel support. In 1979 Ministerial Circular 199 established that an *insegnante di sostegno* (specialized support teacher) could serve up to a maximum of four students with disabilities.

### **1980 through 1989**

Although there was some criticism of Law 517, the 1980s continued a period of ongoing clarification and development in support of *integrazione scolastica*. By 1984 the training of *insegnante di sostegno* had shifted from dedicating approximately half its time to teaching about the medical aspects of disability to a quarter, thus creating more training time to focus pedagogical theories of practice. In 1987 the Ministry of Public Instruction Circular Letter 159: (a) required closer collaboration among persons providing services in local communities; (b) established new regional centers to meet the needs of students with the most severe disabilities (lowest 10% of those with disabilities) and (c) modified syllabi and training of support teachers

that shifted away from a medical model toward effective educational skills. Also in 1987 the Constitutional Court issued a judgment granting the full and unconditional right for all pupils with disabilities, including those with more severe disabilities, to attend secondary schools. This ruling established schooling for all students with disabilities as compulsory.

### **1990 through 1999**

In 1992 landmark Law 104 represented the next major step in the civil rights and integration of people with disabilities in Italian schools and social life. Law 104 outlined a series of principles meant to develop the cognitive, linguistic, and social potential of individuals with disabilities, as well as develop their personal and social autonomy. Some of the key principles included:

#### *Article 1a*

Rights of freedom and dignity of disabled people and their full integration in family, school and society

#### *Article 1b*

Duty of society to anticipate and remove all obstacles to autonomy, self-help and full inclusion of the disabled in society

#### *Article 1c*

The social responsibility of providing knowledge and care for primary and secondary prevention

#### *Article 5*

The necessity to grant health care and rehabilitation services in cooperation with families and family associations

#### *Article 12*

The awareness that the aim of social inclusion is the development of disabled people's potential in relationship, communication, learning and social processes.

The right of disabled children to attend all mainstream classes of school institutions of any order or rank, including university.

The right to education cannot be hindered by either learning difficulties or any other kind of problem such as poverty, low social-cultural level of families, lack of parent's care, ethnicity...

#### *Article 13*

Integrazione scolastica is realized through a network among schools, municipal boards, health units, families, and local associations.

#### *Article 15*

The "gruppi di lavoro per l'integrazione scolastica" [work group for scholastic integration] are teams composed by a variety of individuals at different levels: class, school, local administrations, and local representatives of the Ministry of Public Instruction. They work together to improve the inclusion of students with disabilities and collaborate with other units (e.g., health agencies, municipalities) to realize specific "accordi di programma" [programmatic agreements].

Law 104 also included operational elements such as: (a) the functional diagnosis to qualify a student as "disabled" entitling him or her to an individualized educational plan and support from an insegnante di sostegno, (b) a functional dynamic profile designed to describe the characteristics of the student that have an impact on learning, and (c) the elements of an Individual Educational Plan. Under Law 104 families of students with disabilities have an important, active, collaborative roles as team members.

In 1994 more than 300 participants representing 92 countries (including Italy) and 25 international organizations meet in Salamanca, Spain at the World Congress on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality (hosted by Spain's Ministry of Education and Science Spain and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: UNESCO), to discuss the objective of "Education for All". They unanimously adopted the *Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education*, which affirmed the principle that ordinary schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, emotional, social, linguistic, or other conditions. The Salamanca Statement called on all governments to adopt, as a matter of law or policy, the principle of inclusive education by enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise, and to give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improving national education systems so that they cater for all children regardless of individual difference or difficulties. In 1995, at its 145th session the UNESCO Executive Board, adopted decision 5.2.5 entitled, *World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality*, in support of the appeals made in the Salamanca Statement.

In 1995, Article 13, Ministerial Ordinance 80, distinguished between evaluation of students with physical and sensory disabilities only (without cognitive impairments) who are supplied with access accommodations and are assessed based ministerial (general education) program standards the same as those without disabilities. Those functioning below typical class level (e.g., students with intellectual disabilities) are judged according to their IEP and their grades are identified as such.

By 1996 approximately 98% of students with disabilities in Italy were attending general education classes in regular schools as their primary placements. The Autonomy Law 275/1999 provided additional funding for schools based on: (a) projects fostering integrazione scolastica of students with disabilities and other 'disadvantaged' groups (e.g., students from migrant families) and (b) agreements among networks of local organizations (e.g., health units, municipal boards, voluntary organizations, other schools). As the decade of the 1990s came to a close Law 68/1999 supported inclusion in the workplace for people with orthopedic, psychological, sensory and intellectual disabilities. Businesses were required to hire one person with a disability for every 15 nondisabled employees or pay a fine. Additionally, government incentives (e.g., tax breaks, salary reimbursements) were offered for hiring people with more significant disabilities.

### **2000 through 2011**

With the basic framework of integrazione scolastica in place, major events in the 2000's added refinements and adjustments to the system as well as data collection. To aide in this process the government began following progress of students with disabilities after graduation. The Ministry of Education transformed the library of pedagogic documentation into the Istituto Nazionale di Documentazione per l'Innovazione e la Ricerca Educativa (INDIRE – the National Institute of Documentation for Innovation and Educational Research). The Istituti Regionali di Ricerca, Sperimentazione e Aggiornamento Educativi (IRRSAE – the Regional Institute for Research, Experimentation, and Educational Development) was changed into the Istituti Regionali di Ricerca Educativa (IRRE – the Regional Institutes for Educational Research).

Law 26/2001 and the Local Action Plan measure of Law 328/2000, sought to maintain relatively stable levels of resources for the integrazione scolastica for "vulnerable" groups of students in regular schools. In 2003, Law 53, known as the Moratti Reform law, re-defined the levels of schooling to be: Scuola Primaria (5 years of elementary school), Scuola Secondaria I (3 years of lower secondary or middle school), and Scuola Secondaria II (5 years of upper secondary or high school). During this time period additional reforms incorporated the principle

of “personalizzazione” (personalization) as a way to reinforce formative assessment in more Italian classrooms at the lower secondary level, as well as differentiation of curricular content and tasks to address learning and cultural differences and special educational needs. The bill emphasized the “laboratorio didattico” (learning laboratory) as a way to individualize teaching methods and provide students with learning support. By 2005 Decree 227 addressed the development of new teacher training requiring all general education teachers to attend courses pertaining to integrazione scolastica for students with disabilities. In 2006 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the text to the *UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* (opens to signatures in 2007). Throughout the first decade of the new century Italy experienced an influx of immigration from eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. This has led to new challenges in Italian schools, particularly the increasing number of students who speak a wide variety of primary language other than Italian -- some of these children also have disabilities or other special needs.

During the 2007-2008 school year, previous legislative measures that had established the ratio of 1 specialized support teacher for every 138 students of total of school population and caseload parameters for insegnante di sostegno were rescinded. Although it is not the law, a ratio of one support teacher for every two students with certificates of disability remains the national average with regional variability. Now without an established ratio, support teachers are meant to be appointed depending of the real needs of the school based on the referrals from schools and certification of disability provided by local health units. In conjunction with European Union standards, codes of impairments in the disability certification process were changed to reflect the World Health Organization's *International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health* (ICF).

In 2007 both Italy and the European Union signed the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*. In 2008 it took effect after the 20th country ratified this landmark treaty. In 2009 Italy ratified both the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and the *Optional Protocol*, a side agreement to the Convention that allows its parties to recognize the competence of the *Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* to consider complaints from individuals; the European Union ratified in 2010. In 2010 Law 170/2010, recognized dyslexia, dysorthography, dysgraphia and dyscalculia as a specific learning disorders. While these are still not considered "disabilities" in Italy they are recognized as problems faced by some students that require instructional accommodations by their general classrooms teachers and creates opportunities for teachers to receive training on these topics. The law covers all school levels, including university.

In the past few years Italy has experienced significant economic challenges resulting in austerity measures that have reduced funding for public schools. As of November 2011 Italy is undergoing political transitions following the resignation of Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi that will undoubtedly have an impact on public education policies and resources. The nature, extent, and impact of this change remain to be seen.

### Bibliography of Resources with Selected Annotation

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#### Annotated Bibliography about Integrazione Scolastica 2000-2011

- Balboni, G., & Pedrabissi, L. (2000). Attitudes of Italian teachers and parents toward school inclusion of students with mental retardation. *Education and Training in Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities*, 35(2), 148-159.

This quantitative study explored potential difference in attitudes of Italian teachers ( $n=560$ ), special educators ( $n=118$ ), and parents of children without disabilities ( $n=647$ ) toward the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities and sought to determine if certain variables (e.g., age, experience, socioeconomic status) were related to their attitudes using exploratory factor analysis and ANOVA. Significant differences were identified between the three groups, with special educators reporting the most favorable attitudes, though all groups reported positive attitudes on the majority of variables. Findings also indicated that factors such as age (e.g., younger teachers), socioeconomic status (e.g., parents with higher socioeconomic status), and

experience with inclusion (e.g., teachers) reported more positive attitudes. The authors suggest that more positive attitudes of elementary teachers than high school teachers may result from secondary inclusion being a more recent phenomenon in Italy, thus teachers have had less experience with it. The authors highlight experience, namely direct opportunities to teach students who have intellectual disabilities, as a malleable variable that may positively influence teacher attitudes by providing opportunities for teachers develop more accurate and non-stereotyped conceptualizations of students with intellectual disabilities. The authors conclude that improving teacher and parental attitudes can be further advanced by providing adequate information about students with disabilities related to their needs in inclusive classrooms, highlighting the advantages of inclusion for students without disabilities, having teachers acquire appropriate teaching strategies to facilitate inclusion, and improving schoolwide supports.

Begeny, J. C., & Martens, B. K. (2007). Inclusionary education in Italy: A literature review and call for more research. *Remedial and Special Education*, 28, 80-94.  
doi:10.1177/07419325070280020701

This article provided a review of English-language research (1983-2003) related to inclusive education in Italy. Thirteen of the sources were studies characterized by the authors as addressing: (a) individuals' perceptions about inclusion in Italy (e.g., effects of inclusion, attitudes of acceptance, adequacy of training or supports), (b) perceptions of persons with disabilities presumably effected by Italian inclusion, or (c) educational or behavioral outcomes as a result of inclusion. These included eight articles and five abstracts (where the full text was in a different language). The authors conclude that parents, teachers and school administrators generally recognize positive aspects of inclusive educational practices, though the studies reported mixed perceptions regarding attitudes and outcomes of including students with disabilities in general education classes.

The remaining 26 articles were intervention studies addressing the deceleration of maladaptive behaviors or the acquisition of adaptive behaviors for Italian students with disabilities or other special educational needs, including 12 articles and 14 abstracts (where the full text was in a different language). Although the article's title suggest the review is about "inclusionary education in Italy", notably the authors report that only two of the 26 intervention studies collected at least some of the data in general education classrooms, the remaining studies collected data in clinics and segregated schools.

The authors conclude there is little systematic research available on best practices in inclusive classrooms in Italy, particularly in secondary schools and called for additional research on the practices and outcomes associated with inclusive education in Italy. The authors further suggest Italy will have limited impact on international practices without more data and called for international collaboration regarding research on inclusive education in Italy.

Canevaro, A. (2002). Pedagogical, psychological and sociological aspects of the Italian model: A methodological preamble. In *Conference proceedings: Mainstreaming in education (Southern Europe Disability Committee, 5th Plenary Meeting)*. Rome: Consiglio Nazionale sulla Disabilità. Retrieved from: [www.edscuola.it/archivio/handicap/canevaro.html](http://www.edscuola.it/archivio/handicap/canevaro.html)

*Note:* On the web site an Italian version is followed by a translated English version.

In this report presented during the 5<sup>th</sup> plenary session of the Southern European Disability Committee in Rome, Canevaro offered a description of the evolution of integration in Italian schools. He highlighted the complex realities (e.g., political, economic, cultural) that were associated with the movement from segregated to integrated education for students whose families migrated from southern to northern Italy, as well as those with disabilities. Canevaro described the challenges associated with the movement from segregation to integration including: (a) a lack of teacher readiness, (b) the resistance of trade unions, and (c) the uncertain legislative situation during the 1960s and 1970s.

Canevaro described the instructional opportunities that emerge from integrated school systems, namely that the adaptive and cognitive approaches necessary to teach students with identified disabilities can also be helpful for students who experience educational difficulties, but are not eligible for special education services in the Italian model (e.g., students with dysgraphia, dyslexia). Finally, Canevaro highlights the reciprocal benefits available for students with and without disabilities in integrated models. He concludes this piece by encouraging professionals from a variety of countries to work together to continue the development of practices necessary for integrated education to be beneficial for all children.

Canevaro, A., & de Anna, L. (2010). The historical evolution of school integration in Italy: Some witnesses and considerations. *ALTER, European Journal of Disability Research*, 4, 203-216. doi:10.1016/j.alter.2010.03.006

The two authors, both with extensive and long-term involvement with promoting integrazione scolastica in Italy, offer an historical overview based on their experiences, perspectives, and the literature. They express the concern that the Italian model may not be fully understood internationally, and therefore offer this article in an effort to facilitate that understanding. They are firm in their perspective that Italians cannot allow problems or points of criticism to endanger the country's policy of "integration" that has been implemented since the 1970s. They describe the approach as based on: (a) a welcoming culture in the school context that values diversity as "a point of strength" (p. 205), (b) a system of relations and supports around the person with a disability, (c) attention to learning rather than teaching, (d) understanding the diversity of students in a class rather than the oneness of the teacher, and (e) reciprocal enrichment that provides learning opportunities for nondisabled students, allowing students to develop different ways of learning and living together. The authors remind us of historical tragedies that were spawned when people have been marginalized or dehumanized, arguing that this is an important reason to embrace integrazione scolastica in an effort to develop a more caring society.

Contardi, A. & Gherardini, P. (2003). Together at school: Mainstream school in Italy, from kindergarten to high school. *Down Syndrome News and Update*, 3(1), 11-15. Retrieved from: [www.down-syndrome.org/news-update/3/1/dsnu-3-1.pdf](http://www.down-syndrome.org/news-update/3/1/dsnu-3-1.pdf)

This newsletter article summarizes a presentation given at the Luxembourg Symposium on Inclusion (March 2003) based on the research of Paola Gherardini and Salvatore Nocera for the *Associazione Italiana Persone Down*. The article provides a substantial amount of background information about the history and structures of inclusive educational efforts in Italy. The article asserts that inclusion has contributed to positive cultural changes in the society (e.g., greater tolerance, new ways to consider diversity), while highlighting ongoing concerns associated with



the adequacy of teacher preparation and acknowledging problems with high school inclusion efforts. The article summarizing data from 385 cases documenting positive structures, processes and outcomes (e.g., independence, metacognition, language, reading, writing, mathematics, logic, socio-affective skills) resulting from inclusive education efforts, where students with Down syndrome have achieved previously inconceivable progress. They point to international research showing a decrease in IQ among people with Down syndrome as they age, but indicated this is not so in Italy -- they believe due to inclusive educational opportunities. The authors advocate for placing no pre-defined or rigid limits on expectations of what students with disabilities are capable of learning. They stress the importance of family involvement, the role of classmates, and the high level of human resources as contributors to inclusive educational success. The authors conclude that progress to improve inclusive education can benefit individuals with disabilities and society and we will continue to learn new and better approaches as we progress down this path. Most importantly, they leave us with the message that so long as necessary structures and processes are provided, people with Down syndrome will continue to amaze us.

D'Alessio, S. (2007). "Made in Italy": Integrazione scolastica and the new vision of inclusive education. In L. Barton and F. Armstrong (Eds.). *Policy, experience and change: Cross-cultural reflections on inclusive education* (pp. 53-72). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer Netherlands Science + Business Media B.V. doi:10.1007/978-1-4020-5119-7\_4

This chapter addresses three primary components. First, D'Alessio addresses the challenges associated with the attempted translation and interchangeable use of the terms "integration" and "inclusion" from an international perspective. She points out that the two terms have different cultural and linguistic connotations. From an Italian perspective, "integration is used to refer to the education of disabled students, while inclusive education is concerned with all pupils" (p. 57). D'Alessio suggests that it is time to use the term "inclusion" in Italy as a more accurate description of the current political and social developments, as, in her opinion, the term "integration" has become too narrow.

Second, D'Alessio draws upon her own experiences as a support teacher and as a university tutor, to share her perspectives of integration at the classroom level. She describes the challenges associated with implementing integrazione scolastica including: lack of classroom teacher ownership, lack of collaboration, isolation of students with disabilities within the classroom, low expectations, the lack of a systemic approach to supporting diversity.

Lastly, D'Alessio presents external barriers to integrazione scolastica and inclusive thinking that may occur as a result of the Moratti Reform (Law 53/2003). Essentially the law re-defined the levels of schooling to be primary school (4 years), secondary I (3 years), to be followed by secondary II (5 years). At the beginning of the secondary II level students decide between a vocational education path (professional or technical schools) and university path (liceo). D'Alessio identifies potential unintended consequences, especially the potential tracking of students with disabilities who are already disproportionately enrolled in the professional and technical schools.

D'Alessio, S. (2008). The Italian example. *UNESCO Policy Briefs: Inclusion*, No. 3, p. 2.  
Retrieved from [unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001613/161315e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0016/001613/161315e.pdf)

In this short article, D'Alessio highlights the Italian example of *integrazione scolastica* as evidence that including the full range of students with disabilities in general education classrooms is more than a utopian ideal but is, and has been, a practical reality in Italy. Based on a human rights perspective, all students are welcomed in their neighborhood schools. There are no waiting lists; all students can register at any time of the school year without screening measures, and without any risk of being rejected.

D'Alessio, S., (2009). *Integrazione scolastica 30 years on. Some critical reflections and suggestions for the development of inclusive education in Italy. La nouvelle revue de l'adaptation et de la scolarisation [New Review of Adaptation and Education] Edition Spécial: L'éducation inclusive en France et dans le monde [Special Edition: Inclusive education in France and the World, HS5 Hors série no. 5, 35-65.*

D'Alessio provides a series of critical reflections concerning potential contradictions that arise from the implementation of the policy *integrazione scolastica* at the school level and examines the extent to which *integrazione scolastica*, as historically and currently conceptualized, can be considered an inclusive policy that leads to inclusive education in Italy. In discussing these issues she acknowledges that the term *integrazione* has strong social and community-based dimensions in the Italian language that the English word "integration" does not possess. D'Alessio presents an argument that foundational legislation, Law 118/1971, was not focused on pedagogical and organizational issues, but on issues related to finance, transportation, special services, and the removal of architectural barriers. She asserts that micro-exclusion still exists in Italian schools and that support teachers (i.e., *insegnante di sostegno*) are often used as the only teacher for the student with disabilities because of a lack of collaboration with classroom teachers and lack of pedagogical ownership by general educators. She proposes the need to reform the Italian education system in order to foster the more inclusive participation of all pupils, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, and other oppressed minorities. D'Alessio describes *integrazione* as both liberating and oppressive. She honors the history and progress that has stemmed from policy of *integrazione scolastica* (e.g., closure of segregated schools; participation of students with disabilities in regular schools) and simultaneously expresses concern that participation of disabled people occurs within an uncritical conceptualization of disability that stems from a special needs education paradigm. In order to achieve more inclusive education D'Alessio challenges educators within the Italian system to recognize that important pedagogical work remains to be done, that local solutions need to be encouraged, and that teacher preparation needs to be continually improved. She expresses concern that recent reforms will reduce resources in schools and exacerbate inequities.

D'Alessio, S. (2010). Is the policy of *integrazione scolastica* an inclusive policy? Challenges and innovations in a lower secondary school in Italy. In N. Bélanger, & H. Duchesne, H. (Eds.), *Des écoles en mouvement* (pp.187-233). Ottawa, Canada: Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa.

In this report, D'Alessio points out the difficulties of conducting international research on the topic of inclusive education because there is not a single agreed upon definition and culture context influences its meaning. She offers a definition of inclusive education that envisions including all children without any need to identify and categorize them as different on some dimension (e.g., disability) in order to include them. She encourages the reader to consider the

culture, history and social contexts of each school when examining inclusive education. She emphasizes the importance of understanding the impact of language (e.g., integration, inclusion, mainstreaming) as facilitating or impeding understanding of the realities of different social and cultural contexts around the world.

D'Alessio offers a description of the historical evolution of the policy of *integrazione scolastica* from a more traditional social inclusion approach to a more contemporary emphasis that blends social outcomes while ensuring access to general education curriculum and instruction. She suggests that *integrazione scolastica* has fallen short of a necessary transformational shift to move away from a deficit-based medical model toward a social model of education that is supported by changes in curriculum and assessment. Finally, within this report D'Alessio shares a case study example highlighting practical implications of the policy of *integrazione scolastica*.

D'Alessio, S. (2011). *Inclusive education in Italy: A critical analysis of the policy of integrazione scolastica*. Rotterdam, Netherlands: Sense Publishers.

Stemming from her dissertation research, D'Alessio relies a social model of disability, as opposed to the medical model, to offer a critical analysis of the policies of *integrazione scolastica* in Italian schools. D'Alessio examines both the history and modern practices of *integrazione scolastica*. The text highlights educational, structural and cultural constraints that require a student to receive a certification of disability in order to receive special education supports from an *insegnante di sostegno*. She offers an explanation and evidence of what she refers to as "micro-exclusion" in Italian schools and classrooms, whereby students who are theoretically benefitting from *integrazione scolastica* may be isolated within the classroom with the *insegnante di sostegno* or an assistant, rather than part of typical class activities facilitated by the classroom teacher.

The eight chapters in the book begin with from an examination of the underlying history of *integrazione scolastica*, move to data collected in two Italian schools, and culminate in a critical analysis of policies and practices that support and impede *integrazione scolastica*. D'Alessio strongly suggests that there needs to be a refocusing on the original intent of *integrazione* (i.e., the development of mainstream settings). Finally, she offers suggestions for improvement at the political, social and classroom levels.

D'Alessio, S. (in press). *Integrazione scolastica and the development of inclusion in Italy: Does space matter?* *International Journal of Inclusive Education*.

In this article, which drew on qualitative research findings from two studies, D'Alessio examines the relationship of space and place in schools, and the impact on the separation of students with and without disabilities. Although *integrazione scolastica* is the policy throughout Italy, micro-exclusion in the forms of spatial separation (e.g., special classes, special units, and specially designated spaces) is still common. She concludes that students with disabilities regularly experience micro-exclusion caused by a student being physically in a general education classroom, but sitting in a space apart from peers and not included in the academic or social life of that classroom. In addition, D'Alessio notes, that while support teachers are theoretically available for all of the children in the school and classroom, in her experiences and research they are more often linked exclusively with a student with severe disabilities.

D'Alessio provides definitions for the terms *integrazione*, integration, and inclusion. She then uses these definitions to inform her own analysis of observations and interviews associated with her research, presenting two major findings. First, the social divide between student with and without disabilities continues in Italian schools. She suggests that this may be, at least in part, a result of the students with disabilities being isolated within the classroom surrounded by "an invisible wall" and others who are physically separated in "special units" and "specialised areas" designated only for teaching students with disabilities (p. 12). Her second finding is that the distinctly separate preparation of specialist teachers and classroom teachers is problematic. She notes that the separate preparation at the pre-service level is reproduced in the classroom where there is little shared understanding of pedagogy, curriculum and assessment practices. Finally, D'Alessio challenges her readers to examine more closely the relationship between the use of space and place for students with disabilities in general education classrooms and the impact on school culture, pedagogy, curriculum and assessment.

Devecchi, C., Dettori, F., Doveston, M., Sedgwick, P., & Jament, J. (2012). Inclusive classrooms in Italy and England: The role of support teachers and teaching assistants. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/08856257.2011.645587

This article explores some of the complexities of supports provided for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND) by describing and comparing the roles and experiences of support teachers (*insegnante di sostegno*) in Italy and teaching assistants in the UK. The authors suggest that despite different histories and educational systems, the roles and responsibilities of support teachers in Italy and teaching assistants in the UK share some similarities, and that they also share feelings of being treated as "second-class" members of school staff, which adversely effects their ability to support inclusive education. The comparisons are based primarily on three earlier studies conducted by the authors. They are particularly interested in how to provide effective support for the inclusion of children with SEND in an era of budgetary cuts to education and educational reforms that have reduced services.

The authors explore the reasons why there is so much turnover in support teacher positions in Italy. *Insegnanti di sostegno* frequently ask for redeployment as general education classroom teachers after only a few years after gaining their qualification to work with students who have disabilities, leaving many children without qualified support while local authorities try to fill vacant positions. Examples of concerns expressed by *insegnante di sostegno* in Italy included: (a) feeling blamed by teachers and parents if students do not progress adequately, (b) questioning their own professional abilities and self-efficacy to meet students' educational needs, (c) challenges collaborating with medical team members outside the school, (d) heavy workloads, (e) unclear roles and unresolved discrepancies in expectations among school personnel and families, (f) administrative discontinuity in annual assignments that interfere with them working with the same children, and (g) collaboration challenges with classroom teachers, especially when some still want the *insegnante di sostegno* to take the student with a disability out of the classroom to receive support. Contrary to the spirit of the law, some support teachers report that they are not perceived as part of a team, but as specifically designated to teach only the child with disabilities and they do this in isolation and frequently outside the classroom. Although parents reported general satisfaction with the work of support teachers, it is the absence of

references to the classroom teacher that was a noted concern of the authors, who suggest that too often students with disabilities and the adults that serve them (both assistants in the UK and insegnante di sostegno in Italy) experience exclusion and marginalization within general education classrooms. Italian support teachers report it is the lack of classroom teachers' engagement with the students who have disabilities that proves to be a main concern in combination with systemic problems that fail to support their work. Ironically, it seems that preparing *only some* teachers to work with children with SEND may create a divide between teachers, reinforcing classroom teachers' views that working with children with SEND is a matter of specialized knowledge which they do not have and are not qualified to provide -- this leads the authors to the conclusion that training all teachers to work with students who have SEND is warranted.

Ferri, B. (2008). Inclusion in Italy: What happens when everyone belongs. In S. L. Gabel & S. Danforth (Eds.), *Disability and the politics of education: An international reader* (pp. 41-52). New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

In this chapter, Ferri offers a comparison of US and Italian inclusion policies (e.g., legislation) and practices such as the difference between Italy's rapid insertion approach beginning in the 1970's compared to the incremental approach to inclusion of students with disabilities in the US. She explains how Italian law ensures that students cannot be excluded based on the severity of disability and that it established service delivery standards to facilitate education of students with disabilities in regular classes (e.g., class and configuration parameters, caseload size). She also describes how Italian students with characteristics that would be considered high-incidence or relatively mild disabilities in the US (e.g., specific learning disabilities) are not identified as "disabled", though their need for support is recognized. She quotes teachers she encountered during her travel to Italy as sharing, "... we expect variation in speaking, writing, reading, etc." (p. 43). Therefore, the general expectation is that the classroom teacher will make necessary accommodations for students with learning disabilities and other mild learning problems. These students do not receive have an individualized educational plan and are not entitled to the support of an insegnante di sostegno (Support teacher).

Ferri describes the attitudes of Italian teachers as being predominantly in favor of including students with disabilities in typical education classes, while simultaneously expressing concerns about the need for more and better resources. In Italy, the classroom is often described as a family where, "Of course you include everyone -- you wouldn't push someone out of your family. Why would we push them out of the classroom?" (p. 47). She goes on to explain that the question of *will inclusion pass or fail* is not one that typically would be asked in an Italian context because it is not a policy built on achievement scores, but rather one rooted in ethics of care and concern. The underlying premise is that everyone belongs and that including students with disabilities in typical classes is the right thing to do for all members of society. She contrasts US assumptions rooted in both an individual civil rights orientation and a remedial framework with different assumptions in Italy. She quotes an Italian colleague, Giancarlo Cottoni, as saying that they begin their work with a assumption that, "the child is fine and that it is the school that needs to remediate itself." (p. 50).

Ianes, D. (2006). The Italian model for the inclusion and integration of students with special needs: Some issues. *Transylvania Journal of Psychology, Special Issue No. 2, Supplement No. 1*, 117-127.

Ianes begins by drawing a distinction between students with "disabilities" and those with "special educational needs" (SEN) (p. 117). He emphasizes the importance of better functional assessments as a means of improving individualized educational plans for students with disabilities. Improvements need to allow for examination of both educational and functional impacts of disability. He suggests that such an approach is likely to have the added benefit of supporting students who experience learning difficulties, but are not on educational plans, because consideration would be given to the context. Ianes describes five areas related to inclusive education that are in need of improvement: (a) better connection between the PEI (Piano Educativo Individuale; Individual Education Plan) and classroom curriculum, (b) increased involvement with nondisabled peers, (c) integrating behavioral strategies into the classroom, (d) metacognitive teaching and learning, and (e) increased use of technology. Although he describes the complexities of including students with disabilities as "challenging, hesitating at times, full of lights and shadows", he concludes that after 35 years of inclusion in Italy "the balance is definitely and most largely positive." (p. 127).

Nota, L., Ferrari, L., & Soresi, S. (2006). Facilitating school inclusion. *International Journal on Disability and Human Development*, 5, 323-332. doi:10.1515/IJDHD.2006.5.4.323

Nota, Ferrari and Soresi reviewed existing research suggesting that direct positive experiences affect attitudes. Studies have documented that when parents of children with disabilities start to experience the advantages of school inclusion, they also start to have consistently more positive attitudes toward inclusion than parents of children in special education schools. They also acknowledge the importance of educating parents who have nondisabled children about the value of inclusion, by pointing to the research demonstrating that the attitudes of these parents has an impact on the attitudes of their children. Although teachers tend to agree about the value of inclusion, they also lament the challenges that seem to increase with the presence of a student with a severe disability.

The authors state that placement of a student with a disability in a typical class is insufficient to ensure success. They identify training, positive attitudes, and high expectations as facilitators for inclusive education in the Italian context and the opposite are barriers. Nota and her colleagues indicate that actions related to school inclusion continue to be insufficient and fragmented. They assert that instructional interventions are often not chosen based on proven practice, but are chosen as a result of teacher improvisation. They suggest an increased emphasis be placed on implementing proven educational practices and encourage collaboration among team members (including parents), peer interactions, and self-advocacy.

Reversi, S., Langher, V., Crisafulli, V., & Ferri, R. (2007). The quality of disabled students' school integration. *School Psychology International*, 28, 403-418. doi:10.1177/0143034307084132

Using two different questionnaires, the authors assessed the quality of integration for students with disabilities in three Italian cities. The qualities examined through the

questionnaires were: (a) teachers' points of view related to social and syllabus integration, and (b) general education students' perceptions of their own loneliness relative to having a student with disabilities in their classes or not. Responses were collected from 85 teachers, 88 special education teachers, 102 students with disabilities, and 102 students without disabilities representing 91 different classrooms. Findings indicated that teachers had positive evaluations of the social and syllabus integration of the student with disabilities. In terms of loneliness, although in general students reported a low sense of loneliness, students with disabilities and students in classes where there was only one student with a disability reported slightly higher levels of loneliness than students without disabilities and students in classes where there was more than a single student with disabilities. The authors offer potential explanations for these findings.

Sidoli, R. (2008). Inclusive policy in Italy. Milan: Catholic University of the Sacred Heart. Retrieved on June 22, 2010 from:  
[centridiateneo.unicatt.it/it/cesi\\_Inclusive\\_policy\\_in\\_Italy\\_inglese.pdf](http://centridiateneo.unicatt.it/it/cesi_Inclusive_policy_in_Italy_inglese.pdf)

Sidoli describes educational inclusion as an embedded aspect of the larger efforts for societal inclusion at all levels (e.g., employment, economic, health). She offers a review of relevant Italian laws (i.e., 118/1971, 517/1977, 104/1992) that offer safeguards against discriminatory practices in schools. Sidoli goes on to describe the importance of students with disabilities participating in class activities with peers while consideration is given to their individualized goals and objectives. Finally, Sidoli promotes the importance of the active participation of parents of children with disabilities as decision-makers with equal status.

Vianello, R., & Lanfranchi, S. (2009). Genetic syndromes causing mental retardation: Deficit and surplus in school performance and social adaptability compared to cognitive functioning. *Life Span and Disability: An Interdisciplinary Journal (Ciclo Evolutivo e Disabilità)*, 12(1), 41-52.

Vianello and Lanfranchi examined the cognitive and adaptive profiles of students with genetically based syndromes (i.e., Down syndrome, Fragile X, Cornelia de Lange, Prader-Willi syndrome) who were included in general education classes in Italy. They found that the majority of the students performed better than expected, which they refer to as "adaptive surplus", based on their mental age in the areas of reading, writing, math, and social adaptability. They suggest that this may be attributed to inclusive educational placements of Italian students with these disabilities compared to students with the same genetically based conditions who live in countries with less access to inclusive schooling. It is noteworthy that this was not an examination of the impact of any specific intervention or package of interventions, but rather based simply on the students' lived, and presumably varied, experiences in general education classes. They concluded that "adaptive surplus" in academic and social performance seems to be greater where academic inclusion of students with disabilities is more widespread.

Vianello, R., & Lanfranchi, S. (2011). Positive effects of the placement of students with intellectual developmental disabilities in typical class. *Life Span and Disability: An Interdisciplinary Journal (Ciclo Evolutivo e Disabilità)*, 14(1), 75-84.

Following the publication of the earlier article by Vianello & Lanfranchi (2009) about deficit and surplus functioning, the journal editors invited four sets of authors with backgrounds in inclusive education from the US and Malta to write reactions and responses to the article that were published in subsequent issues of the journal. Full citations for each of the four articles (Giangreco, 2009; Scruggs & Michael, 2010; Tanti-Burló, 2010; Waldron & McLeskey, 2010) are found in the "List of Related Sources..." later in this resource compilation. This article summarized some of the key points from the four invited articles. Overall, the articles supported the general notions that typical class placement of students with disabilities promotes: (a) positive psychological development (e.g., friendships, social acceptance, improved self-concept, higher levels of happiness), (b) higher academic achievement, (c) better adaptive functioning, and (d) does not harm or impede the development of peers without disabilities. Desired characteristics of inclusive classrooms are briefly discussed (e.g., welcoming attitude of teachers, in-class support, flexible instruction, teacher ownership for instruction of the student with a disability, age-appropriate participation, access to the general education curriculum). Although a response article pointed out that some students in special classes can exhibit adaptive surplus, these authors noted that theoretically adaptive surplus in a typical class should exceed adaptive surplus in a special class. There was agreement that quality inclusion requires more than mere placement in a typical class, but also appropriately designed curriculum, instruction, and supports.

Zambelli, F., & Bonni, R. (2003). Beliefs of teachers in Italian schools concerning the inclusion of disabled students: A Q-sort analysis. *European Journal of Special Needs Education, 19*, 351-366.

The intent of this quantitative study was to compare a purposefully mixed sample of Italian middle school teachers ( $n=23$ ) from the Friuli-Veneto region, who were identified through an initial interview as having the following profiles about scholastic integration of students with disabilities: (a) positive attitudes with experience, (b) positive attitudes without experience, (c) negative attitudes with experience, and (d) negative attitudes without experience. The study was based on the premises that scholastic integration of students with disabilities is more than simply placement in a general education class, but is a complex phenomenon that requires collaboration and teacher engagement and that due to limited training, attitudes teachers develop can constitute an obstacle to scholastic integration. Using 67-items in four categories: (a) concept of inclusion, (b) methods of conceiving teaching, (c) role of the disabled child's family, and (d) opinions regarding the role of the support teacher, the teachers were asked to engage in a Q-sort process to rate the items by level of agreement and their response were analyzed with factor analysis using varimax rotation.

Findings confirmed the hypothesis that different beliefs of teachers were distributed across different factors based on experience and attitudes toward inclusion. For example, teachers with both experience and positive attitudes were strongly opposed to special schools, considered the presence of a student with a disability enriching, and felt the support teacher should work with all students, not just those with certified disabilities. To the contrary, teachers with experience and negative attitudes thought Italian regulations were "hardly avant-garde" and that there are too few support teachers, did not consider family involvement of primary importance, and favored special schools because they had encountered "impossible" cases of integration. The authors provide these and additional findings along with related implications for practice (e.g.,



information sharing about the limits and risks of segregated education; ways to conceive teaching in inclusive classrooms, roles for support teachers, the nature of parental involvement). They conclude by encouraging all those involved in integrated education to focus their collective efforts on how to ensure quality and success for students in inclusive schools, rather than doubting the usefulness of inclusion and its realization.

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### **European and Italian Web Sites Related Education, Inclusion, and Disability**

Academic Network of European Disability Experts

[www.disability-europe.net](http://www.disability-europe.net)

Associazione Italiana per la Ricerca e l'Intervento nella Psicopatologia dell'Apprendimento L'AIRIPA

(Italian Association for Research and Intervention in Psychopathology of Learning)

[www.airipa.it](http://www.airipa.it)

Associazione per il Coordinamento Nazionale degli Insegnanti Specializzati e la Ricerca Sulle Situazioni di Handicap: L'Associazione CNIS  
(Association for the National Coordination of Specialist Teachers and Research on Handicap Situations: Association CNIS)

[www.cnis.it](http://www.cnis.it)

Associazione Italiana Persone Down  
(Italian Association for People with Down syndrome)

[www.aipd.it](http://www.aipd.it)

ASTRID-OR

Portfolio per l'Assessment, il Trattamento e l'Integrazione delle Disabilità - Orientamento  
(Portfolio for the Assessment, Treatment and the Inclusion of Disability - Vocational Guidance)

[www.giuntios.it/it/catalogo/DI002](http://www.giuntios.it/it/catalogo/DI002)

Centro di Ateneo di Servizi e Ricerca per la Disabilità, la Riabilitazione e l'Integrazione  
(University Center of Services and Research for Disability, Rehabilitation and Integration)

[dpss.psy.unipd.it/cda/ze-index.php](http://dpss.psy.unipd.it/cda/ze-index.php)

Commission of the European Communities

*2006 Communication from the Commission to the Council and to the European Parliament: Efficiency and Equity in European education and training systems*

[ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comm481\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/doc/comm481_en.pdf)

Coordinamento Italiano Insegnanti di Sostegno (CIIS)  
(Italian Coordination Support Teachers)

[www.sostegno.org](http://www.sostegno.org)

Council of the European Union

*Council conclusions (May 2009) on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (ET 2020)*

[eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:EN:PDF](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:119:0002:0010:EN:PDF)

Council of the European Union

*Council conclusions (May 2010) on the social dimension of education and training 3013th Education, Youth and Culture Council meeting*

[www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/114374.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/114374.pdf)

Council of the European Union

*Council conclusions (January 2011) on the role of education and training in the implementation of the Europe 2020 strategy*

[eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:070:0001:0003:EN:PDF](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2011:070:0001:0003:EN:PDF)

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

[www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml](http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml)

Decreto No. 5669: La Legge 8 ottobre 2010, n. 170, Recante Nuove Norme in Materia di Disturbi Specifici di Apprendimento in Ambito Scolastico

(Decree No. 5669: The Law October 8, 2010, n. 170, Laying Down New Rules on Specific Disorders of Learning Within the School)

[www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/0db6aebb-b140-4c17-9ab8-7746e7e21112/dm12luglio2011suDSA.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/0db6aebb-b140-4c17-9ab8-7746e7e21112/dm12luglio2011suDSA.pdf)

Diversabileonline

[www.diversabileonline.com](http://www.diversabileonline.com)

Disabilità Intellettive

(Intellectual Disabilities)

[www.disabilitaintellettive.it](http://www.disabilitaintellettive.it)

Disability Studies Italy

[www.milieu.it/DisabilityStudiesItalyEN/DisabilityStudiesItalyEN.html](http://www.milieu.it/DisabilityStudiesItalyEN/DisabilityStudiesItalyEN.html)

Educazione & Scuola

(Education and School)

[www.edscuola.it](http://www.edscuola.it)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education

[www.european-agency.org](http://www.european-agency.org)

European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education: Inclusive Education in Action

[www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/iea](http://www.european-agency.org/agency-projects/iea)

Edizioni Centro Studi Erickson

(Erickson Issues Research Center)

[www.erickson.it](http://www.erickson.it)

European Education Directory

*Structure of Education in Italy 2005-2006*

[www.euroeducation.net/prof/italco.htm](http://www.euroeducation.net/prof/italco.htm)

Federazione Associazioni di Docenti per l'Integrazione Scolastica (FADIS)

(Federation Associations of Teachers for School Integration)

[www.integrazionescolastica.it](http://www.integrazionescolastica.it)

Insegnanti di Sostegno (in deroga): le Norme e le Questioni Costituzionali

(Support Teachers [notwithstanding]: the Rules and the Constitutional Issues)

[www.superando.it/content/view/4775/116](http://www.superando.it/content/view/4775/116)

Integrazione – Disabilità: Centro di Documentazione

(Integration Disability: Documentation Center)

[www.integrazionedisabilita.it/disabilitamo](http://www.integrazionedisabilita.it/disabilitamo)

International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF)

[www.who.int/classifications/icf/en](http://www.who.int/classifications/icf/en)

ISTAT: Istituto Nazionale di Statistica

(National Institute of Statistics)

[www.istat.it](http://www.istat.it)

La Nostra Famiglia

(Our Family)

[www.lanostrafamiglia.it](http://www.lanostrafamiglia.it)

Life Span & Disability: An Interdisciplinary Journal

[www.lifespan.it](http://www.lifespan.it)

Linee Guida per L'integrazione Scolastica Degli Alunni Con Disabilità

(Guidelines for School Integration of Students with Disabilities)

[www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/115c59e8-3164-409b-972b-8488eec0a77b/prot4274\\_09\\_all.pdf](http://www.istruzione.it/alfresco/d/d/workspace/SpacesStore/115c59e8-3164-409b-972b-8488eec0a77b/prot4274_09_all.pdf)

L'integrazione Scolastica nella Percezione degli Insegnanti (Canevaro, D'Alonzo, Ianes & Caldin 2011)

(School Integration the Perceptions of Teachers)

[www.erickson.it/Libri/Pagine/Scheda-Libro.aspx?ItemId=39936](http://www.erickson.it/Libri/Pagine/Scheda-Libro.aspx?ItemId=39936)

Ministero dell'Istruzione, dell'Università e della Ricerca (MIUR)

(Ministry of Instruction of the University of Research)

[www.istruzione.it](http://www.istruzione.it)

[www.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/disabilita](http://www.istruzione.it/web/istruzione/disabilita)

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development  
*Education at a Glance 2008: OECD Briefing Note for Italy*

[www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/17/41278806.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/21/17/41278806.pdf)

Persone con Disabilità e Diritti

(Persons with Disabilities and Rights)

[www.handylex.org](http://www.handylex.org)

Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education

Adopted by the World Conference on Special Needs Education: Access and Quality Salamanca, Spain, 7-10 June 1994

[www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA\\_E.PDF](http://www.unesco.org/education/pdf/SALAMA_E.PDF)

Sindrome di Down

(Down syndrome)

<http://www.sindrome-down.it>

Superando

(Surpass)

[www.superando.it](http://www.superando.it)

UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization

[www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

[www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/education/themes/strengthening-education-systems/inclusive-education)

[www.unesco.org/education/efa/know\\_sharing/flagship\\_initiatives/disability\\_last\\_version.shtml](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa/know_sharing/flagship_initiatives/disability_last_version.shtml)

[unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf](http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0017/001778/177849e.pdf)

UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre

[www.unicef-irc.org](http://www.unicef-irc.org)

World Health Organization

[www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

## **Appendix F: Article Submitted for Publication Review**

### **Guiding Principles for Including Secondary Students with Intellectual Disabilities in General Education Classes**

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January 14, 2012

**Manuscript submitted for publication review**

#### **Abstract**

Increasing numbers of elementary age students with intellectual disabilities are receiving their education in inclusive classrooms in their neighborhood schools. As these students progress in public education, it is not unusual for them to spend increasing amounts of time in special education classes with little access to the general education curriculum or peers without disabilities. Often this is due teacher concerns over the performance “gap” between students with and without intellectual disabilities. The purpose of this article is to describe four underlying principles and two curricular approaches to support secondary teachers in making sense of this gap to enable them to welcome and teach students with intellectual disabilities in their general education secondary classrooms. The principles are: (a) least dangerous assumption, (b) partial participation, (c) fairness, and (d) functional versus academic programming. The curricular approaches are multi-level curriculum and curriculum overlapping. When each area is incorporated into instructional planning, it is more likely that students with intellectual disabilities can be supported in one classroom.

### Guiding Principles for Including Secondary Students with Intellectual Disabilities in General Education Classes

Sarah, a student with Down syndrome, had an elementary school experience similar to students without disabilities in her community; she attended the school in her neighborhood where she was included in general education classes throughout the school day. During these early years of school Sarah developed interests in science, reading, and art. She also developed friendships that regularly extended beyond the school day. In middle school, things began to change. Teachers started expressing concerns about what they perceived to be an increasing functioning gap between Sarah and her classmates. As a result, she spent more and more time in a special education resource room where she received 1:1 or small group instruction with other students with intellectual disabilities. Sarah spent less time with her nondisabled classmates and correspondingly less time engaged in the general education curriculum.

Sarah's father noticed that she stopped asking him to look up science or history topics online, rarely mentioned the names of classmates, and was no longer invited to go out with friends. By the end of middle school Sarah's education shifted primarily to a daily living skills program (e.g., cooking, laundry, shopping, banking), justified as being important to prepare her for adult life, even though these areas were not considered school priorities for students without disabilities.

Sarah's high school experiences continued along an increasingly segregated path in terms of both place and curricular content. Her school days were filled with daily living skills, sheltered work experiences, and segregated leisure activities. She was not provided with curricular access to interesting literature, biology labs, current and historical events, or extended math concepts. There were no academic projects related to the general education curriculum. By the time she finished high school her circle of friends had been reduced, her interests had narrowed, and her opportunities were becoming artificially restricted. But at least theoretically, she had developed life skills that would enable her to live, work, and play in an inclusive adult community.

As high school graduation approached, Sarah's educational team realized that at a time when the lives of students without disabilities were opening up to new opportunities for work, school, activities and relationships, Sarah's world was becoming smaller. The majority of her segregated secondary school experiences had been facilitated by paid adult service providers (e.g., special educators, paraprofessionals, therapists) and now it was likely that her adult life would be similar. The school team members began to ask themselves, "Why did we think segregated experiences would prepare her for an interesting life in an inclusive community? Without relationships with her nondisabled peers, how can she access their support and friendship now or develop new relationships? How might the lives of her classmates have been enriched by long-term friendships and shared experiences with Sarah?"

Perhaps the bigger questions are: *Why did her inclusive school experiences during elementary school shift toward increasingly segregated experiences during middle and high school? Why did Sarah move from being an active member of a general education classroom where she had access to rich and interesting curriculum and a diverse group of classmates to a relatively isolated learner in a small group of other students with intellectual disabilities in separated settings? Why did she go from participating in science, reading, math, and social studies, to learning to wash laundry, go grocery shopping, and identify money combinations? At some point was she no longer interested in science, reading and art? Whether 7 or 17 years old, Sarah is the same inquisitive learner with strengths and interests that should be deepened and*

expanded through a variety of school experiences. Apart from getting older and maturing, Sarah did not change significantly; rather the preconceptions of the adult decision-makers changed. As Sarah aged, team members decided that it was less important for her to have access to varied and thought-provoking curriculum alongside of her peers. In retrospect, the team realized that the path they choose for Sarah did not make sense; segregation does not prepare anyone for an inclusive life.

Perhaps if Sarah's team had a different way of conceptualizing the perceived gap between Sarah's abilities and classroom curriculum they might have explored ways to alter their own practices rather than removing Sarah from the classroom. Maybe the outcomes could have been different (and better) for Sarah and her classmates. The purpose of this article is to describe four underlying principles and two curricular approaches to support secondary teachers in making sense of this gap within inclusive classrooms. The principles are: least dangerous assumption (Donnellan, 1984), partial participation (Baumgart, 1982; Ferguson & Baumgart, 1991), issues of fairness, and considerations of functional versus academic programming. The approaches to curriculum are multi-level curriculum and curriculum overlapping (Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 2011). When each of these areas is incorporated into instructional planning, it is more likely that students with a wide range of learning and performance characteristics can be supported in general education classrooms.

### **Inclusive Principles**

#### **Least Dangerous Assumption**

Donnellan (1984) described a way of framing decisions using the *criterion of the least dangerous assumption*, which asserts “in the absence of conclusive educational data, educational decisions should be based on assumptions that, if incorrect, will have the least dangerous effect on the student” (p. 142). For example, it is less dangerous for a student with intellectual disabilities to be placed in a regular classroom with the appropriate supports and accommodations than in a special class. This is logical because inclusive environments provide more normalized opportunities to: (a) engage with varied and interesting curriculum, (b) interact with nondisabled peers, (c) access natural supports, and (d) learn routines of daily life such as following a schedule, being prepared for class, and maintaining classroom responsibilities or jobs. All of these opportunities have been deemed to be valued for students without disabilities and are just as important for students with intellectual disabilities.

Donnellan went on to explain that, “Generally, the criterion of least dangerous assumption holds that there is less danger to students if teachers assume instructional failure is due to instructional inadequacy rather than student deficits” (1984, p. 147). This notion provides teachers with the challenge and opportunity to figure out how to support students with intellectual disabilities in general education classes. Classrooms where the instructional arrangements are varied (e.g., small groups, team work, interactive projects, cooperative groups, investigations) provide ongoing opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities to be members of the academic and social networks within the class. For example, if students are arranged in interdependent groups of three, then when the teacher asks a question of the class no one answers until all the triads have generated an answer. This requires that all students in the class be involved in generating their best answer and all students contribute to and develop group work skills. The teacher then calls on one or two groups to offer their responses. This model of interaction increases the involvement of all students in the content while concurrently providing the natural peer support that might be needed for the student with intellectual disabilities. Indeed,



instruction that prioritizes interaction and group work is far more amenable to including students with diverse characteristics.

Jorgensen, McSheehan and Sonnenmeier (2010) link the least dangerous assumption with a notion they refer to as *presumption of competence* as way to further open doors of possibility for students with intellectual disabilities. In Sarah's case for example, if we presume that she is competent, then we provide supported access to the general education curriculum. Furthermore, if we presume the competence of general educators teachers (which we do), then we assume that many of their existing skills can be applied to teach Sarah, understanding that like her, they may need some supports from the special educator on occasion. For example, in secondary content areas, there are specific vocabulary terms related to each unit of instruction. In order for Sarah to learn some of the new vocabulary, teachers need to design multiple ways for her to review and practice the new terms. Teachers might incorporate online flashcard programs where the terms and pictures can be combined. Because many online flashcard programs provide a variety of games to practice the vocabulary, initial preparation will lend itself to many ways for Sarah to practice. Such an accommodation may be necessary for Sarah, but it is also helpful for many other students who have difficulty with memorization, speak English as a second language, or are visual learners. This is an example of where a classroom teacher does not need the support of a special educator as the instructional activity because the instructional strategy is one she uses commonly for students without disabilities.

However, in another situation the classroom teacher might need assistance in figuring out how to meaningfully include Sarah in classroom discussions. The special educator could model how to incorporate delayed responding techniques during instruction as a way to give Sarah the extra processing time that she needs. In Sarah's case, this involves posing a knowledge level question to her with the prompt, "Sarah, I'll be back for your answer in a moment." During this time Sarah can look at her notes or ask a peer for assistance. The teacher continues instruction and circles back for Sarah's answer.

Combining the least dangerous assumption with the presumption of competence encourages a sense of optimism that students have broad capabilities to learn and teachers have broad capabilities to teach. Teachers who presume competence proceed as if students who are functioning at a significantly different level than their peers are still curious and capable of learning interesting content. This is helpful because the presumptions that we bring into the classroom have a significant impact on the expectations we have, and actions we take, for our students and ourselves as teachers.

### **Partial Participation**

The second principle that is helpful when considering inclusive secondary classrooms is partial participation (Baumgart et al., 1982; Ferguson & Baumgart, 1991). Simply put, partial participation refers to the idea that everyone can participate, at least in part, in most activities. Partial participation provides a name for a practice that has always been with us in various contexts. Parents invite their children to assist with parts of many common tasks (e.g., baking, cleaning, home repairs, yard work) even though the child cannot do the entire task independently. Transferring this principle into the classroom allows all students to participate in part in most classroom activities. Partial participation offers a constructive alternative to an "all of nothing" mentality that too often leads to students with intellectual disabilities being separated from general education curriculum and removed from general education classes.

When considering how a student might partially participate in any school activity it is important to keep in mind that the context and the nature of the involvement must be at least

status-neutral, but preferably status-enhancing. Generally, contexts that are status-enhancing are those where students without disabilities of the same age spend time (e.g., general education classrooms, cafeteria, library). Activities that are status-enhancing are generally those in which students without disabilities are participating in on a regular basis (e.g., membership in a school club or on a sports team, participation in volunteer activities, going to the movies with friends). In the school context consider a science experiment example where one student might be the recorder, while another reads the directions, a third combines the chemicals into a solution, and all three observe and discuss the reaction. Each student has a distinct role and participates in the completion of the project. Or during a social studies class where students are learning about the contributions of specific historical figures, the student with intellectual disabilities is called upon to contribute part of the information that reflects recall knowledge while another student offers information that requires synthesis of the content. In mathematics, one student solves the problem without a calculator and the other checks it with a calculator. The possibilities are endless if teachers consider partial participation as a cooperative way to include all students in all activities. Moving these first two guiding principles from theory to practice can bring to mind important questions for teachers to consider related to the relationship between life skills and academic programming and questions about fairness.

### **Life skills versus academic educational programming**

As students with intellectual disabilities age, it is not uncommon for team members to question whether the student should have an academic program or a "life skills" program (i.e., daily living skills). This question wrongly assumes that the answer requires a choice between those two options. In reality, a third option is to have *both* in an individually determined balance (Giangreco et al., 2011).

Historically, teachers have considered life skills such as cooking, shopping, telling time and money management to be functional because they assist many people in moving through the daily responsibilities related to life, work and leisure. Some students with intellectual disabilities take longer to learn these skills. As a result, many of them spend years working exclusively on life skills as a means of being prepared for adult life. Unfortunately, a singular focus on future life skills overlooks those functional skills associated with being an adolescent and denies the student interesting academic content that is available to most students through the general education curriculum. Similarly, an exclusive focus on academic skills, when one has not developed important functional life skills, also can be problematic.

More appropriately, if teams identify the functional life skills that will support a student with intellectual disabilities to access the life and learning of an adolescent and embed those skills in the secondary school context, then it is more likely that the student will have access to enriched, age-appropriate academic, functional and social learning opportunities. Examples of these naturally occurring opportunities include: getting to class on time with peers, having the necessary materials for each class, maintaining appropriate behavior while in class, hanging out with friends, making and communicating choices, managing money for events with friends, participating in after school activities, and the list goes on. Some of these functional life skills are the framework of the daily life of an adolescent who is involved with school and friends. In addition, the academic portion of the day offers students with opportunities to deepen and expand their understanding of the world around them, identify strengths, interests and needs. Too often, secondary students with intellectual disabilities are simply not afforded these opportunities to learn, at least part, of a wide variety of interesting topics.

**Fair Does Not Mean Same**

For some teachers, variation in access can lead to questions of equity. Is it fair that a student is accountable for significantly less or different content than classmates? Is this really enough content? Is it appropriate to evaluate student progress based on a criterion-referenced rather than norm-referenced way? If the educational team determined that the student with intellectual disabilities would be responsible for less content, then “yes” it is enough even though it is not the same. The least dangerous assumption compels us to implement the appropriate and least intrusive supports within a classroom context to enable the student to learn at least part of the curriculum that has been identified as being important for students without disabilities. In a general education secondary classroom the student with intellectual disabilities will have had an opportunity to engage in ongoing interactions with same-age peers, exposure to general education curriculum content, opportunities to learn the functional life skills that are associated with being an adolescent, and more. Students with intellectual disabilities enjoy and benefit from learning in some of the same ways that their peers do, even if they do not learn the same amount. In addition, no harm is done to their nondisabled peers who have the opportunity to become friends, support a classmate, develop attitudes and practices of what it means to be a member of a diverse community.

Furthermore, fairness means that everyone gets what they need -- even though it is not necessarily the same. For example, if a student needs glasses to see better, it is fair that she receives them. If another student needs a text written at the second grade level or the movie version to enhance understanding of the elements of a story, it is fair that he receives them. When teachers adopt this sense of fairness, students begin to experience the reality that there are differences among all of us and those differences can be addressed within our communities. Students also learn that having characteristics that are different from others does not have to mean removal from the classroom community. After all, when a line is drawn in the sand regarding who is and is not included, how long will it take for the line to be move and cut off the next student?

Integrating these principles into daily practice requires a framework for thinking about curriculum and instruction that is broad enough to benefit many students in today’s complex secondary classrooms. The adoption of multi-level curriculum and instruction, as well as curriculum overlapping can work together to provide a way to think about curriculum.

**Approaches to Curriculum****Multi-Level Curriculum and Instruction**

Ask any teacher and they will tell you that the students without disabilities in their classes range in ability both above and below the designated grade level. Teachers have been designing curriculum and instruction to address these variations for generations. In fact, in schools where multi-graded classrooms are the norm, teachers deliberately teach students with an even greater range of abilities than would be found in single-graded classes, using student diversity as a point of leverage. Multi-level curriculum and instruction is an approach that can be used to address the needs of any classroom where diversity is a key element and learners are functioning at, below and above grade-level.

Multi-level curriculum and instruction refers to “teaching a diverse group of learners within a shared activity in which students have individually appropriate learning outcomes within the same curriculum area” (Giangreco et al., 2011, p 10). Secondary teachers often implement aspects of multi-level curriculum and instruction throughout the course of a unit. For example, during English class a student who is particularly gifted in that area might read Shakespeare in

the original old English version, while most of the students read a translated version. Still other students who speak English as a second language might use written texts in combination with text-to-speech output devices and a movie version. Generally speaking, classroom teachers are familiar with practices of multi-level curriculum and instruction as they apply them pretty routinely. Teachers understand that adolescents vary widely and rarely perform at exactly the same academic, social and behavioral levels.

What about Sarah, the student with Down syndrome? How does a teacher implement multi-level curriculum and instruction when the gap is perceived to be more significant? Fundamentally the application is the same; the key is to consider the curricular content in relationship to Sarah's strengths and needs. For example, Sarah brings several assets; she has developed a love for literature, although in tenth grade, she can read at the second grade level, and when given a plot line of 5 key events, she can explain the basic elements of a story. During class the teacher might have Sarah fill in the skeleton of a plot line on the whiteboard, followed by other classmates adding to it as the class discussion continues. While most students are examining the complex relationships within the plot, Sarah is learning the basic events of the plot-line and the relationships among the key characters. Because her teacher is committed to utilizing multi-level approaches for all students, the reading materials available in the class range from graphic novels to texts written at an elementary level (e.g., *Streamline Shakespeare*, *Cliff notes*) to old English versions of the written text. The classroom library has expanded as a result of Sarah's presence that benefits students with a variety of learning characteristics. Students who speak English as a second language have begun to use the high interest low readability texts, students interested in graphic arts supplement their reading with graphic novels, and students interested in technology maintain an electronic flashcard stack online for everyone in the class. The deliberate use of multi-level curriculum and instruction benefits all students in the classroom.

### **Curriculum Overlapping**

There are some students with severe intellectual disabilities for whom multi-level curriculum and instruction is insufficient; in these cases curriculum overlapping provides a way to ensure individually appropriate curriculum content within general education classes. Similar to multi-level curriculum and instruction, curriculum overlapping refers to "teaching a diverse group of students within a shared activity in which students have different individually appropriate learning outcomes" (Giangreco et al., 2011, p. 11). The difference is that in curriculum overlapping the learning outcomes are from two or more different curriculum areas. For example, Charles has severe intellectual disabilities and is learning to use an augmentative communication system. Some of his educational goals include: (a) initiating and responding to peers, (b) operating his electric wheelchair, and (c) using a micro switch to turn on and off electrical devices. Beginning with the least dangerous assumption participation in general education classes with same age peers is inherently more stimulating than not being with peers. It is likely that Charles would find it more interesting and reinforcing to initiate and respond to interactions with same aged peers, than to contrived situations with paid adults.

During small group activities (e.g., science lab, social studies project) for example, Charles will use a micro switch to advance the slides on a computer presentation that his teammates use to follow directions and access more content. The teacher is clear that Charles' primary goal is to learn to operate the micro switch with the support of his classmates and this goal is *overlapped* within small group instruction in the general education classroom. The combination of the least

dangerous assumption and the presumption of competence compels us to have this learning occur in the general education context where he will have access to the natural supports of his peers and may in fact be learning some of the general education content.

Curriculum overlapping represents a way of planning and thinking about participation that allows for meaningful inclusion for students who are considered to have the most severe disabilities. Curriculum overlapping combined with the active use of partial participation, allows students with severe intellectual disabilities endless ways to participate in a wide variety of age appropriate activities and content.

### **Conclusion**

Why is this so important now? The answer is quite simple, despite decades of research and practice demonstrating successful examples of inclusive education for students with intellectual disabilities at the secondary level, it continues to be the exception rather than the rule. Many of these students receive substantially separate educational experiences and then proceed on to live fairly segregated lives.

Let us construct an alternative scenario for Sarah using the principles of this article. Imagine that Sarah continued to be included in general education after elementary school. In middle school the teachers would continue to support Sarah and her classmates in building positive interdependence through cooperative group learning and a variety of shared experiences. While this is critical for Sarah as a way to contribute meaningfully and to access the natural supports of her peers, teachers have realized that many students without identified disabilities benefit from this approach. Assuming competence would mean that the teachers believe that Sarah is capable of learning. As a result Sarah acquires more information, skills, and experiences that transfer to expanding her areas of curiosity and provide her with interesting things to talk about with friends and family. Similar to her peers, Sarah's intellectual and social worlds expand. Continuing with the least dangerous assumption, in high school would mean that teachers still believe that Sarah can learn and that access to general education content will continue to expand her world. As a result, teachers learn to access topical literature written at a variety of levels from graphic novels to printed matter that is significantly below and above grade level. Classroom teachers use technology in meaningful and deliberate ways. Sarah participates in afterschool clubs with a few of the same students who have been her friends since elementary school and with others she met during high school.

Sarah would have many opportunities to learn the functional and social skills appropriate for her age. While in high school, she would learn money management by participating in various club fundraising events where she could be co-treasurer, purchasing her own lunch and school supplies, shopping with friends and more. While Sarah does not cook complex meals, she can arrange her own lunch and snacks. She and her parents have decided that after high school she will take a cooking class in the community and she will learn other skills associated with independent living as she works toward that, after all, many of her high school friends without disabilities plan on having supports in their next steps. For example, some of her friends going to college will not have to learn to cook yet because they are buying meal plans through school. A few other friends will be living at home with their parents as they save up money to rent apartments. During this time they will be learning to wash their own laundry and management money as they set up a budget. As young adults, all of the graduating high school seniors have functional life skills to learn as they enter this next phase of their lives.

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